

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1953

3/6

SIGHT AND SOUND

*The Film
Quarterly*



SOME IDEAS ON THE CINEMA : Cesare Zavattini

REPLIES TO A QUESTIONNAIRE : Film Critics and Film-Makers

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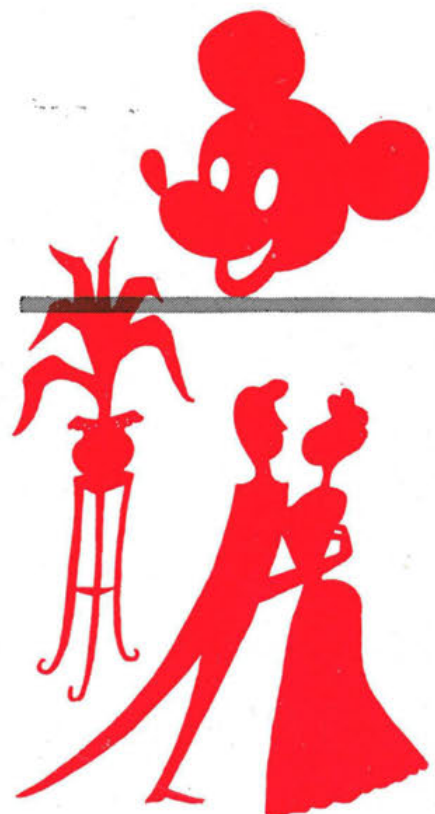
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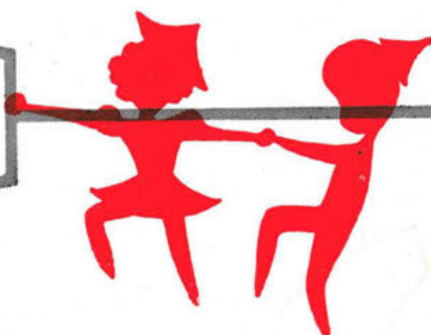
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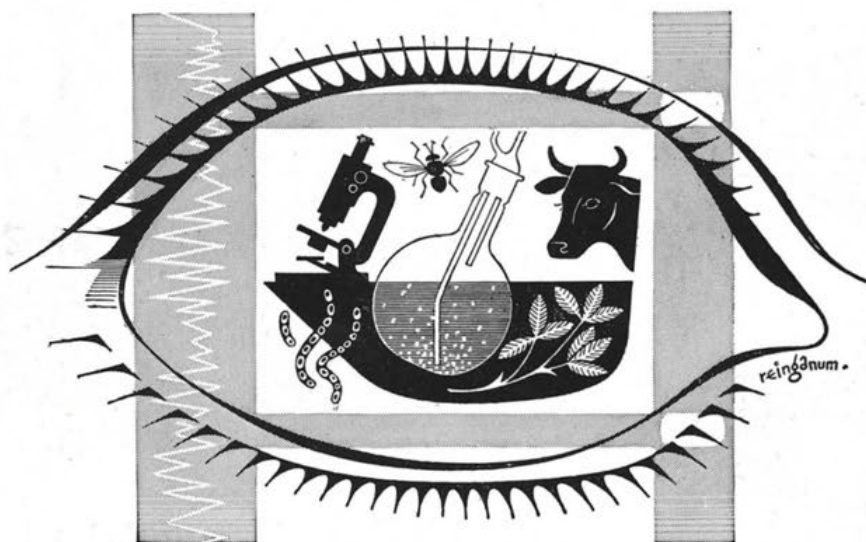


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This list has been compiled for us by the staff of SIGHT AND SOUND and we hope it may serve as a useful general guide to the principal films now in British cinemas.

ADORABLES CREATURES (*G.C.T.*). Four women and a young fashion artist. Over-long sex comedy with too few bright moments, but good performances from Danielle Darrieux, Renée Faure. (Daniel Gelin, Martine Carol, Edwige Feuillère; director, Christian-Jaque.)

AFFAIR WITH A STRANGER (*R.K.O.*). So-so sentimental comedy about married life of a playwright and a model, told in confused flashbacks. (Jean Simmons, Victor Mature; director, Roy Rowland.)

ANDROCLES AND THE LION (*R.K.O.*). A minor Shaw comedy over-dressed with extravagant lack of taste in a Pascal production, but partially redeemed by most of the acting and a respect for the text. (Victor Mature, Jean Simmons, Robert Newton; director, Chester Erskine.)

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN (*Paramount*). A young immigrant from Georgia discovers America; strenuously warm-hearted and quite implausible. (Jose Ferrer, Kim Hunter; director, George Seaton.)

BACKGROUND (*A.B.F.D.*). Screen version of a play about children's reactions to the news that their parents are getting a divorce; only fair. (Valerie Hobson, Philip Friend; director, Daniel Birt.)

BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS, THE (*Warners*). King Kong-style piece of science fiction in which a 100,000,000-year-old monster causes a panic on Wall Street; ingenious, but not lively enough. (Paul Christian, Paula Raymond; director, Eugene Lourie.)

***BELLISSIMA** (*Regent*). Luchino Visconti's film concerning a woman's desperate efforts to turn her small daughter into a film star; clever, fascinating, a little chilly. (Anna Magnani.)

BLUEPRINT FOR MURDER, A (*Fox*). Tense, neatly-plotted thriller about a step-mother who may or may not be a murderess. (Joseph Cotten, Jean Peters; director, Andrew Stone.)

BY THE LIGHT OF THE SILVERY MOON (*Warners*). Rather humdrum musical in a small town setting; Doris Day sings. (Gordon Macrae, Billy Gray; director, David Butler.)

CALL ME MADAM (*Fox*). Screen version of Irving Berlin's musical; Ethel Merman's brassy vitality briefly entertains, but the book and the sets let the piece down. (George Sanders, Donald O'Connor, Vera Ellen; director, Walter Lang.)

DANGEROUS WHEN WET (*M.G.M.*). Esther Williams takes to Channel swimming; agreeable, bright musical. (Fernando Lamas; director, Charles Walters.)

FANFAN LA TULIPE (*Films de France*). Gérard Philipe as a legendary French hero in a kind of French *Crimson Pirate*. Lively if a bit heavy-handed swashbuckler. (Gina Lollobrigida; director, Christian-Jaque.)

FORBIDDEN (*G.F.D.*). Unsavoury gangster story set in Macao; violent but scarcely exciting. (Tony Curtis, Lyle Bettger, Joanne Dru; director, Rudolph Mate.)

HOUSE OF WAX (*Warners*). Mad, maimed waxworks proprietor stocks his show with the corpses of his victims; preposterous melodrama, but the best 3-D to date. (Vincent Price, Phyllis Kirk; director, Andre de Toth.)

IS YOUR HONEYMOON REALLY NECESSARY? (*Adelphi*). Standard British bedroom farce, partly redeemed by a spirited performance from Diana Dors. (Bonar Colleano, David Tomlinson; director, Maurice Elvey.)

LAUGHING ANNE (*Republic*). Conrad retold in lending library style; a slow and depressing venture into the tropics. (Margaret Lockwood, Wendell Corey; director, Herbert Wilcox.)

LET'S DO IT AGAIN (*Columbia*). A remake, with music, of *The Awful Truth*; laboured, unfunny story of a couple thinking better of a divorce. (Ray Milland, Jane Wyman, Aldo Ray; director, Alexander Hall.)

LITTLE BOY LOST (*Paramount*). Sentimental, rather woebegone story about an American's search of Paris for his lost son; moderately skilful tear-jerker. (Bing Crosby, Christian Fourcade, Gabrielle Dorziat; director, George Seaton.)

MASTER OF BALLANTRAE (*Warners*). Stevenson's novel transformed, rather unforgivably, into an Errol Flynn vehicle; piracy, sword-fights, etc. (Beatrice Campbell, Anthony Steel; director, William Keighley.)

MELBA (*United Artists*). Long, plushy, coloured picture-book "biography" of Melba; an English picture with American director, writer and star. (Patrice Munsel, Robert Morley, John McCallum; director, Lewis Milestone.)

MINUTE DE VERITE, LA (*International*). A polished, intelligent, but over-slow account of a crisis in a marriage; some good acting. (Jean Gabin, Michele Morgan, Walter Chiari; director, Jean Delannoy.)

MOULIN ROUGE (*Independent/British Lion*). An alleged biography of Toulouse-Lautrec, unimaginatively untrue to life; some interesting Technicolor. (Jose Ferrer, Colette Marchand; director, John Huston.)

QUO VADIS (*M.G.M.*). A long Lay-off of Ancient Rome; big, mainly beastly and slightly cut for an "A" certificate. (Robert Taylor, Deborah Kerr; director, Mervyn LeRoy.)

RED BERET, THE (*Columbia*). Alan Ladd joins the paratroopers; unconvincing Anglo-American war picture. (Leo Genn, Susan Stephen; director, Terence Young.)

RIDE, VAQUERO! (*M.G.M.*). Western set in New Mexico, concerning troubles between old inhabitants and new settlers; vigorous and efficient. (Robert Taylor, Ava Gardner; director, John Farrow.)

SALOME (*Columbia*). The Gospels re-written, to prove Salome a sadly misunderstood character; vulgar and excessively dull. (Rita Hayworth, Stewart Granger, Charles Laughton; director, William Dieterle.)

SCANDAL AT SCOURIE (*M.G.M.*). A Catholic orphan has a rough time in a Protestant Canadian community; Sunday school sentimentality. (Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, Donna Corcoran; director, Jean Negulesco.)

SECRET FOUR, THE (*United Artists*). A perfect crime goes wrong; fairly slick, rather brutal thriller. (John Payne, Coleen Gray; director, Phil Karlson.)

SWORD AND THE ROSE, THE (*R.K.O.*). The gay Tudors: rompingly re-written account of Henry VIII's sister's love for a dashing man-at-arms. Technicolor. (Richard Todd, Glynis Johns; director, Ken Annakin.)

TAKE ME TO TOWN (*G.F.D.*). Three sons pick a wife for their backwoods, widower father; run-of-the-mill rural comedy. (Ann Sheridan, Sterling Hayden; director, Douglas Sirk.)

WHITE WITCH DOCTOR (*Fox*). Adventurer Robert Mitchum and nurse Susan Hayward become involved with an African tribe; standard jungle hokum. (Walter Slezak; director, Henry Hathaway.)

(Films reviewed in this issue of SIGHT AND SOUND are not included in the Film Guide)

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ON THE COVER : Simone Signoret in a scene from Marcel Carné's *Thérèse Raquin*

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 PAC FILM for *Febbre di Vivere.*
 PARIS-FILM PRODUCTION for *Therese Raquin.*
 NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA for *Romance of Transportation.*
 FILMS DE FRANCE for *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot.*
 LES FILMS GIBE for *Le Bon Dieu sans Confession.*
 HARLEQUIN PRODUCTIONS for *Sunday by the Sea.*

The Festivals

VENICE

If someone had unkindly wished to suggest that the contemporary cinema was almost dead, he could, I fear, have done little better than choose about 26 from the 30 feature films shown this year at Venice to prove his point. Whatever the elements of coincidence, this profusion of mediocrity means that some disagreeable facts have to be faced. Certain countries, for instance, miscalculate in their choice of films—America could have sent *Shane* and *From Here to Eternity* (both requested by the Festival authorities) instead of *Roman Holiday* and *The Four Poster*; Britain's solitary choice of *Moulin Rouge*, which comprises mainly American and French talent, was altogether less fortunate than would have been, say, *Genevieve*; the Russians' stiff and boringly tendentious *Rimsky Korsakov* was another mistake; two of the four Italian entries, de Filippo's *Napoletani a Milano* and Zampa's *Anni Facili*, were no more than slick local pieces for popular consumption; and, alas, as for the entries for Argentina, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany and India, if they represented the best level of the country concerned, then non-participation would have been wiser.

On the other hand, granted the difficulties of not offending national pride, and of not alienating the industry by curbing too far its tendency to use Venice as a kind of gala launching ceremony, if the object is to be *Arte Cinematografica*, a less compromising policy is necessary. It was bad enough to accept the indecent *Pick Up on South Street*; but to play the bitter farce out to the end—cutting the soundtrack off during references to "Stalin's men," Reds," etc., and then awarding the film a prize for its "humane" ambience—was inexcusable. It was hardly surprising that emphatic boos and cat-calls greeted this, and some of the other prize announcements, and that there was a general feeling that when hooch is brought to a bottle party, someone should complain.

It is perhaps significant that some of the most interesting manifestations occurred more or less in the margin of the Festival. There was the 10 days' festival of documentary and children's films at which, incidentally, it was rewarding to see 1,500 Italian children entirely captivated by C.F.F. films, notably *Johnny on the Run* and *To the Rescue*, and to discover a few things of real quality: a long, gripping, often savage Hungarian nature film, *From Blossom Time to Autumn Frost*; *Le Métier du Danseur*, a light impressionistic French account of a ballet rehearsal, directed by Jacques Baratier, with Jean Babilée; an Italian study of illiteracy in a remote country village, *Christ Didn't Stop at Eboli*, and of underwater marine life, *Jungle Under the Sea*, with repellent and greedy inhabitants vividly caught in Ferrinacolor. These and two British shorts, *Sunday by the Sea*, recently shown in London, and *The Moving Spirit*, an ingenious cartoon by Halas and Batchelor, all won prizes. During the main festival itself, a retrospective series on the French cinema, arranged by Henri Langlois, had some extraordinary revelations, notably a rich programme of silent comedy, and the technical innovations of Léonce Perret's *L'Enfant de Paris* (1910), and of Abel Gance, whose *La Roue* (1921) anticipates Eisenstein, and



"Le Bon Dieu Sans Confession": Yvan Desny (left) and Danielle Darrieux (centre) in a scene from Claude Autant-Lara's new social comedy.

whose magnificent *Napoléon* (1927) was projected with the imaginative triptych episodes on the CinemaScope screen, two days, appropriately enough, before the CinemaScope gala which closed the Festival. UNESCO sponsored an exhibition, and also two programmes of ethnographic films, including extracts from *Moana* and Poirier's *Croisière Noire*.

Of the 30 feature films, six received silver Lions of St. Mark, and four received bronze ones, the good, the so-so and the mediocre being about evenly rewarded. No first prize, or Golden Lion, was given, which in the circumstances indicated less a recognition on the jury's part that the standard was abnormally low, than a desire to reward as many important countries as possible; and was unjust, anyway, to the Festival's best film, from Japan. Better to draw a veil over some atrophied work by distinguished directors (the late Pudovkin's *The Return of Vassily Bortnikov*, Sternberg's *The Saga of Anatahan*, Autant-Lara's *Le Bon Dieu sans Confession*) and over such pretentious vulgarities as Yves Allegret's *Les Orgueilleux*, which debases a scenario by Sartre, or the Brazilian costume melodrama, *Sinha Moca*. This leaves the Russian *Sadko* (silver Lion), with some pretty colour effects but a disappointingly pedestrian style as a whole, two films of some promise and the special case of Carné's *Thérèse Raquin*, before coming to the only works of exciting distinction. *I Vitelloni* (silver Lion), the second film by Federico Fellini, formerly scriptwriter for Rossellini, Lattuada and others, is a sketch of life in an Italian provincial town, with some sharp social observation and skilful narrative effects, but too slight and undeveloped really to make its point; the Yugoslav *The Parvenus*, directed by Boris Stupica, describes the clash between a rising professional class and the disintegrating aristocracy of seventy years ago, is constructed with an almost Balzacian solidity and evokes its period with strong feeling, but there is something rather flat and unrealised about its central characters.

Thérèse Raquin (silver Lion) is an impeccable stylistic exercise, replacing Zola's social commentary with an equally dated 30's one. It contains various muted, irrelevant *reprises* of Carné's earlier work with Prévert, and one has the sad feeling that this careful, serious and empty work, with its two gifted players, Simone Signoret and Raf Vallone, miscast, is searching desperately for something to say.

The Japanese *Ugetsu Monogatari* (translation: *The Tales of the Pale and Mysterious Moon after the Rain*), directed by Kenji Mizoguchi, who made *The Lady O-Haru*, has at last the quality of revelation. Like *Rashomon* and *Tora-No-O*, its starting point is a period of civil war and the adventures of a few individuals in an epoch of violence and upheaval, but it combines the purest folklore with its reality. This strange and beautiful work, in which phantoms, friendly and vengeful, magical signs and rituals, coexist with the visible world, has richly delicate images, a powerful dramatic development, and is wonderfully acted by Machi-Ko Kyo and Mayasuki Mori,

"Romance of Transportation". This Canadian National Film Board cartoon, a light-hearted survey of transportation, was shown at the Edinburgh Festival.





"Ugetsu Monogatari": Masayuki Mori and Machiko Kyo (the husband and wife of "Rashomon"), in a scene from this Japanese production, shown at the Venice Festival.

both of whom were in *Rashomon*.

Finally, *The Little Fugitive*, an American film made independently by Ray Ashley, Morris Engel and Ruth Orkin, and also rewarded with a silver Lion, tells of a 6-year-old boy who runs away to Coney Island, rides on the merry-go-round, takes pony lessons, retrieves empty Coca Cola bottles on the densely crowded seashore and gets a dime for them, and later sleeps by himself on the deserted beach at night. The camera, of which he seems marvellously unaware, follows his moods and adventures, and though its eye does not see far below the surface, it records a moment of childhood with unusual intimacy and charm.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

EDINBURGH

Documentary is an old soldier with a tin cup in his hand and a remarkable talent for survival. "It seems to me," said the Chairman of the Edinburgh Film Festival two years ago, "that documentary has fallen on evil days . . ."

That's how it's been since the old boy lost his Commission at the end of the war, yet good documentaries continue to be made; not enough perhaps to please us, but enough to make it worth while holding a realist film festival year after year.

I thought 1953 at Edinburgh was a good show, as rewarding as any we've had. There were about 20 really good films, and that's one a day for three weeks: it's about all you can expect. I've written in another article about the French programme—*Le Grand Méliès*, *Le Rideau Cramoisi*, and *Crin Blanc*: that was the peak in Darien, but, let's face it, not documentary except in a very loose translation.

The biggest and truest film in the Grierson tradition was *World Without End*, made by Basil Wright and Paul Rotha for UNESCO. There has been nothing quite so ambitious since Rotha's *The World is Rich*. We've had films before, of course, about the fight against disease and ignorance, but this one had a world sweep, a combination of clear-sightedness and human kindness that I found very moving. I could have done with a little less portentousness in the commentary, but it was a great pleasure to see two of our most talented filmmakers being allowed once again to do the missionary work that is dearest to their hearts and most apt for their skill.

World Without End was the most ambitious of the documentaries but another that was widely admired for its accomplishment was the Dutch *Houen Zo*. This record of rebuilding Rotterdam took us back to the excitement of the G.P.O. experiments, films like *Night Mail* and *Coalface*: it had no words, was beautifully photographed, and used sound with an almost forgotten ingenuity.

Canada made her usual solid, heartening contribution. The National Film Board sent over the Festival's funniest cartoon, the delightfully sustained *Romance of Transportation*—made, incidentally, by a very simple animation technique—a clear, affectionate picture of life among the Eskimos called *Angotee*,

"Sunday by the Sea": an impression of a day at Southend, directed by Anthony Simmons and photographed by Walter Lassally, and winner of a Grand Prix at Venice.

and an honest, unvarnished story of the opening up of the north country, *The Settler*.

Among the reporting jobs, I liked two British films—*They Planted a Stone*, a story of irrigation on the Nile, and *Operation Hurricane*, an account, necessarily sketchy, of the atomic explosion at Monte Bello. A British film I disliked was the badly conceived, back-firing, propagandist, *Operation Malaya*.

Brazil sent *The Bandit*, which shook us all with its rhythm and drive, not to speak of its savagery. Russia sent *Glinka*, a tired, party-line biography distinguished by some magnificent colour photography by Tisse. The opening film, *Martin Luther*, was careful, honourable, and unimaginative, but it concerned a question of conscience, and so, as it turned out, did two of the late entries, Rossellini's *Europa '51* and Alf Sjöberg's *Barabbas*.

Rossellini continues his post-war inquiry into the problem of faith, and tells here the story of a woman who tried, quite simply, to follow the Christian injunction and love her neighbour; she is committed to an asylum, and only the poor she has befriended remember her with their tears—not the priest, or the Communist, or her mother, or her husband. As in all his films, Rossellini indulges in erratic continuity and slapdash photography; there are powerful moments, but not enough of them to hide the banalities of his script.

Alf Sjöberg is much more concerned with form; he has a wonderful eye for a composition and an ability to build and sustain an Eisenstein-like complexity of images. But he, too, suffers from script trouble, although here I think it can be traced back to the weaknesses of Par Lagerkvist's novel, from which the film is derived. The story starts with the Passion of Christ, most vividly described, and everything that follows must necessarily be a steady diminuendo.

Russia and Hungary sent us two popular science films, *Life in the Arctic*, and *From Blossom Time till Autumn Frost*. Both were outstanding, bigger and better than anything by Disney. *Life in the Arctic* was made by Alexander Zguridi, who has a justifiably high reputation for films of natural life, and the Hungarian record was by Dr. Istvan Homoki-Nagy, who gave us *A Kingdom on the Waters*. These films were outstandingly better than anything along the same lines made in the West.

Among the smaller films, everyone who saw it liked *Philemon The Footballer*, a lesson on road safety made in Southern Rhodesia. There was praise, too, for *The Grey Metropolis*, an amateur film by the people who gave us *The Singing Street*: the city, of course, was Edinburgh, and the words, beautifully spoken, were by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Edinburgh in 1953 left us in good heart. The humanists, the people like Wright and Rotha, the anonymous writers and directors of the United Nations films, are doing a good job in the far places and deserve support; so do the crazy men like James Broughton, who sent us that delightful mixture of slapstick and ballet called *The Pleasure Garden*; and so, too, do the men and women who put on these shows year after year, arranging discussions and arguments and lectures, and sending us away appalled, exhausted, excited, and dissatisfied.

J. A. WILSON.





"Four Chimneys". Kinuyo Tanka.

BERLIN

This year's *Berliner Filmfestspiele* started a couple of days after the riots had broken out in the Eastern sector of Berlin, and we naturally asked the young man who came to meet us at the airport on behalf of the authorities how he thought the political situation would affect the Festival. He offered us the twelve cigarettes which were given to all visitors as a token of welcome, and told us that the effect had already been rather grave: "*Miss Gina Lollobrigida has not arrived—she will be a day late.*" (Actually she did not appear, nor did some other invited stars.) This set the tone for the rest of the Festival. There were to be film-shows and cocktail parties—the authorities, in an attempt to rival the more ritzy senior film festivals, even tried, unsuccessfully, to make us refer to the festivities as "*Die Berlinale*"—and the Eastern sector was not to be mentioned: for this week it did not exist.

We found the pretence difficult to keep up. The first function was announced as a screening of *Pickwick Papers* (*Abenteuer eines Junggesellen*) for Eastern audiences and Press only. What, we wondered, would this wild, ragged audience of teenagers, partly from the other side of the Iron Curtain, make of Mr. Pickwick? We never discovered. The Mayor of West Berlin, Professor Reuter, popped out from the wings of the cinema's stage, and it was immediately clear that he had no intention of making an official festival-opening speech. He was greeted with great enthusiasm and seemed able, in his quiet lecture-room manner, to rouse the audience at will. The rioting in East Berlin, he told us, had had tragic results; but it was a sign of hope because it proved to the world that what he, Reuter, had been trying to tell Washington and London for the past four years was true: the Germans in East Berlin were not sovietised, they wanted, like their Western brothers, to live in a united Germany. The shouting had not begun to die down when two tiny Japanese gentlemen found themselves on the stage—for what, we wondered: to introduce Mr. Pickwick? We were to see a Japanese film and they hoped we would enjoy it. Mr. Pickwick was to be in strange company.

But not yet. A newsreel—eight minutes of sport, two minutes of Eastern rioting—was followed by a *Kulturfilm* of terrible thoroughness and inertia surveying the history of Sicilian mosaics. After this, the feature film turned out to be the Japanese *Entotsu No Mieru Basho* (*Four Chimneys*)—Mr. Pickwick having been without explanation postponed.

Four Chimneys proved to be the most rewarding film of the Festival. Set in Japan, among the slum dwellings inhabited by a lower middle class family, it is in structure a kind of contemporary *Rashomon*. A complex melodramatic incident is viewed by its four participants from four viewpoints, each finding in his own character a different answer to the problems of life in post-war industrial Japan. The story is framed by a beautiful symbolic device of four tall factory chimneys, which, viewed from different angles, cast respectively one, two, three or four ghost-like shadows over the city. Violent, beautifully shot, tautly composed and acted with a flamboyance which never stands in the way of subtlety, the film is the work of Heinosuke Gosho, a veteran director with 72 films to his credit. (Asked why he had not shown any outside Japan before, he said simply, "No one asked me.")

The evening show, advertised as "Berlin-Hollywood-Berlin", though better organised, was less rewarding. The *Waldbühne*, in which we were to see the first Hollywood German film since the war, *Das Mädchen auf dem Dach* (the German version of *The Moon is Blue*) is a huge semi-circular outdoor amphitheatre built by Hitler for the 1936 Olympic Games and holding some 25,000 people. First on the bill was a stage show: we were to relive the first twenty-five years of the sound cinema through the songs of a group of German crooners, accompanied by the jazz band of Horst Kudritzki. Among the twenty-eight songs that followed, only *The White Horse Inn* and *Body and Soul* were recognisable. Then came the stars—first a couple of dozen German ones (the males mostly in their fifties), then Trevor Howard, for some reason carrying a bottle of gin, and James Hayter as Mr. Pickwick. We applauded them all, but kept our biggest cheers for the one and only Gary Kupfer, who came on to the stage, bowed and disappeared again into the sylvan off-stage. (The American journalists here believed that Gary Cooper, who has "done" most of the festivals this year, was touring Europe as an official good will representative of the State Department. If so, his trip has been a success: he got quite as many inches in the next day's popular Press as Herr Reuter.)

The *Rhapsody in Blue* from Horst Kudritzki was followed by a display of fireworks, which the authorities set off in spite of rumoured fears that East Berlin might see and misinterpret them. This over, we thought the film must surely follow. But no. The survey in song of twenty-five years of sound cinema was resumed, this time, with characteristic German thoroughness, going backwards from 1953 to 1930. The *Chatanooga Choo-choo* sung *andante* in German sounded a little like a hymn, and a vigorous tenor assured us that "you make my life so glamorous, no wonder I feel amours". Two more hours of this: never have twenty-five years of sound cinema seemed so long and *schmalzig*.

Apart from *Four Chimneys* and another Japanese film, *Sengoku Burai* (*The Mercenaries*)—a medieval morality tale, gripping and violent—most of the films were left-overs or second helpings from Cannes. *Crin Blanc*, *O Cangaceiros*, *The Sun Shines Bright*, *Le Salaire de la Peur* and the rest, have all been reviewed from Cannes or are shortly going to be seen in London. The German cinema was represented by two futile (and not particularly well mounted) pieces of *kitsch*. For the record, *Le Salaire de la Peur* was voted the most popular film of the Festival, and the Berlin Senate judged *Man on a Tightrope* the film best representing the values of the Western world.

But it was not the films which really held one's interest in Berlin. One retains, rather, the memory of the day the Western Sector Government organised a procession through the town in official mourning for the victims of the Eastern riots. The crowd was quiet, well behaved and relatively small. Outside the Hotel Kempinski, where crowds of young Berliners waited all day for a glimpse of Gary Cooper, things were much more lively.

KAREL REISZ.

LOCARNO

FRANCIS KOVAL writes: In past years the Locarno festival has offered particular attractions of its own, but in 1953, unfortunately, disappointments were uppermost. The usual informality and pleasantly sociable atmosphere were betrayed by muddled organisation, and the disastrously bad weather, which made screenings in the huge open-air theatre impossible. The diversion to local cinemas resulted in journalists finding no seats reserved for them, and the inevitable protests at the entrance doors culminated one night in a colleague becoming involved in an altercation with the police.

Nor did the quality of the films compensate. The Locarno festival is not government-sponsored, and the dependence on Swiss distributors imposes, of course, a serious limitation on the choice of pictures, but even so the general level was abnormally low. In particular, Italy and France disappointed. The former sent three films, *Febbre di Vivere* (Claudio Gora), *La Signora Senza Camelie* (Antonioni) and *Le Infedeli* (Steno and Monicelli), all of which are aimed to interest the spectator in the intricacies of sexual relations among the Italian "upper ten"; each has some interesting qualities, but there is a general lack of humanity. In addition, there was Carmine Gallone's Technicolor biography, *Puccini*, with all the usual trappings, and a war picture called *I Sette Dell' Orsa Maggiore*, a tribute to Italian sailors who abused Spain's neutrality during the war in order to blow up British ships. The French selection, a comedy by Marcel l'Herbier, *Père de Mademoiselle*, Maurice Cloche's melodrama *Rayes des Vivants*, and Berthomieu's *Belle Mentalité*, with Fernandel, was very undistinguished.

From other countries came a Czechoslovak medieval story, *The Emperor's Baker*, rather pedestrian but with good colour, which achieved some impact, and, from the same country, two Jiri Trnka puppet-films, *Pilgrimage* (made in 1947), and the new *Myths of Czech History*, rather brutal and primitively nationalist, but with some effective design. The Russian films were also distinguished for visual effects, both of them in colour: an animal documentary, *In the Country of the White Bear*, and the musical biography, *Glinka*. The latter contains a routine scenario, nationalist and rather cumbersome, but Alexandrov's direction and Tisse's images give it a more individual surface style.

The Locarno festival awards no prizes, but the international critics traditionally nominate the best entries at the "Gratitude Luncheon" they offer to the organisers each year. This time the "artistic" prize was shared between the most notable American entry, David Bradley's 16 mm. version of *Julius Caesar*, a lively experimental venture, and *Glinka*. The "most human" picture was a competent American social melodrama,

The Glass Wall, directed by Maxwell Shane, which was concerned with the refugee problem, and no prize was awarded for the "most optimistic" film, it being rightly decided that the profusion of slapstick and vaudeville was not to be confused with optimism.

Work in Progress

Great Britain

Robert Hamer: *The Father Brown Story*, adapted from G. K. Chesterton and starring Alec Guinness.

J. Lee-Thompson: *The Weak and the Wicked*, a story about women in prison based on Joan Henry's *Who Lie in Gaol*, with Glynis Johns, Dame Sybil Thorndike, Diana Dors, Athene Seyler, John Gregson.

Group 3: *Devil on Horseback*, a story of a boy jockey, directed by Cyril Frankel, with Googie Withers, John McCallum, Jeremy Spenser.

Orson Welles appears in an adaptation of Maugham's *Lord Mountdrago* (Director: George More O'Ferrall), one of *Three Cases of Murder*. Wendy Toye and David Eady are in charge of other cases.

France

Marcel Carné: *L'Ange du Ring*, a boxing story with several *Jour se Lève* collaborators; Jacques Viot (writer), Gabin and Arletty (players). Then *Le Corsaire*, from Marcel Achard's play, in colour and 3-D.

Jacqueline Audry: *Huis Clos*, from Sartre's play, with Arletty and Roger Pigaut.

René Clément: *M. Ripois et la Nemesis*, with French interior and English exterior shooting; a story of a modern Don Juan (Gérard Philipe) in London. English victims include Valerie Hobson, Joan Greenwood.

U.S.A.

Vincente Minnelli: *Brigadoon*, from the stage musical, with Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse. In CinemaScope.

Walter Lang: *There's No Business Like Show Business*, a musical starring Ethel Merman. In CinemaScope.

Gottfried Reinhardt: *Beau Brummel*, a swashbuckler with Stewart Granger, Eleanor Parker. In CinemaScope.

Delmer Daves: *The Gladiators*, a sequel to *The Robe*, with Susan Hayward, Victor Mature. In CinemaScope.

George Stevens: *Giant*, from Edna Ferber's Texas novel. In WarnerSuperScope.

George Cukor: a musical version of *A Star is Born*; Judy Garland returns to the screen, James Mason co-stars. In 3-D.

George Sidney: *Kiss Me Kate*, from the Cole Porter musical; with Kathryn Grayson, Howard Keel, Ann Miller. In 3-D.

Billy Wilder: *Sabrina Fair*, a romantic comedy with Spencer Tracy, William Holden, Audrey Hepburn.

Marina Verdi and Massimo Serato in Claudio Gora's "*Febbre di Vivere*" ("Fever for Life"), shown at Locarno. An Italian correspondent, John Francis Lane, writes that Gora, another actor turned director, has made what is "perhaps the only outstanding new Italian film so far in 1953... A bitter satire on Roman youth, at present victim of a crude neo-Fascist, would-be existentialist pose". Gora's previous, and first, film as director was "*Il Cielo e Rosso*", from Giuseppe Berto's novel.



Oil

ON THE SCREEN



A SERIES of films, sponsored by Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, has been made to illustrate those chapters in the story of the oil industry which are of more popular interest.

All these films have been made to entertain as well as instruct and are already enjoying a wide distribution in many countries. They also include films of special interest to universities, schools, business and training colleges and scientific societies. Each is available in both 35 mm. and 16 mm. sizes. One of these films is described briefly here, and details



“RIG 20”

For the first time in Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's history, fire broke out during the drilling of an oil well on 1st May, 1951. To extinguish the blaze, the column of burning gas was snuffed out by an explosive charge. The explosion shot half-a-mile of steel pipe high into the air. This is one of the most exciting action pictures ever filmed and in 15 minutes shows how firefighting experts fought a five weeks' battle to extinguish the blaze. “Rig 20” was awarded a first prize at the Venice Film Festival of 1952.

This film is available only in 16 mm. size

of the others in the series can be obtained from the Petroleum Films Bureau, from whom all 16 mm. films and selected 35 mm. films may be obtained free of charge.★



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**WAITING
and
SEEING**

A SIGHT AND SOUND contributor currently in Hollywood, CURTIS HARRINGTON, sends an acute summary of the situation there:

"Hollywood has been taking advantage of the usually (though more so this year) inactive summer months to think through the new situation caused by the arrival of 3-D and wide screen in relation to the diminishing box-office returns that have resulted from the wide American acceptance of television. Although the advent, or rather the public's suddenly evinced interest in, the polaroid 3-D process, hit the industry with considerable impact, it can hardly be called in its effect, as it has been in some quarters, a "revolution" equal to that of the arrival of sound. The novelty in itself already shows signs of wearing off. What *is* in the nature of a revolution, however, is the fact that, with or without the embellishment of the 3-D illusion, the motion picture screen shape as we have known it appears to be well on its way towards obsolescence. A change of the image proportion of the cinema is a matter of singular æsthetic importance but, not perhaps surprisingly, the problem from this point of view has so far been almost entirely ignored; instead, cued by the unique, tricky, complex and extremely expensive Cinerama process, which uses a deeply curved screen and three projectors to produce an illusion of image depth, a French inventor has come up with the process now officially known as CinemaScope, which in the camera's eye squeezes together on one ordinary size frame of film an extremely wide angle of view and then in projection expands it again. The result sacrifices height for width of image, and produces no special depth illusion at all, since the one strip of film cannot be kept in focus on a deeply curved screen, the real requirement for a non-polaroid depth illusion process. The CinemaScope image is, however, impressively huge and seems to offer easy gratification for the mad desire that possesses Hollywood to outclass the tiny and traditionally proportioned television screen. Although only one studio at first introduced CinemaScope, most of the other majors have contracted to make a few pictures in the process.

Meanwhile, from a production point of view, Hollywood's thinking is almost all in terms of "big" pictures. The double feature programme seems on its way out; certainly the "B" pictures will no longer be made, because the quality that is designated by that term has become exclusively the property of the short television film. Rightly, people will no longer emerge from their homes to see clear and large what they can see blurred and small at home. The screen is thus becoming a medium exclusively for spectacle and grandeur and scenic wonder. A recent *Hollywood Reporter* headline announced that "Widescreen Spurs Outdoor Pix", explaining that "all studios have on their programmes pictures which must be shot outside, thus giving the films a wide range, at least photographically". That last parenthetical comment—"at least photographically"—says a great deal. It seems that it may be a matter of months, possibly years, before the content and style of a film will again be considered important factors in its creation; spectacular novelty is certainly the chief concern at the moment."

With *The Robe* practically upon us, this estimate leaves little to comment on, and nothing to be mitigated. The CinemaScope demonstrations in London during July were scarcely very encouraging; one was struck—the mediocrity of the films themselves apart—more by the handicaps of the process than by its possibilities. It seemed to have the main disadvantage of Cinerama (the largeness destructive of intimacy and the refinements of cutting) without its main advantage (the human eye frame of vision which, with the rightly calculated proportions of the curved screen, gave an illusion of depth, of being "in the picture"). The response—in the number of installations ordered—in this country has not, at the time of writing, been notably high: about 300 cinemas have decided to buy the new equipment, which is only a little over five per cent of the total number of cinema theatres in Britain. The "wait and see" policy is, of course, right and inevitable; and one good result of it (apart from the likelihood, mentioned elsewhere in this issue, that Europe may provide a brake for the "revolution") will be a greater flexibility in distribution methods here. As Jympson Harman pointed out recently in *The Evening News*:

"The small number of cinemas ready to handle these expensive experiments has broken down the bad old system whereby one firm's pictures always went to the same circuit of theatres. The effect will be the more general booking of the best pictures and longer periods of exhibition."

Meanwhile, none of Hollywood's best films this year—with one possible exception—have needed any of the new processes. If *Shane* had been shot for widescreen (but *not* CinemaScope)—as opposed to being projected on it—some of its effects might have been heightened; but the Houseman-Mankiewicz *Julius Caesar*, Ford's *The Sun Shines Bright*, Minnelli's *The Band Wagon* and *The Bad and the Beautiful*, Charles Walters' *Lili*, Hitchcock's *I Confess*, *Come Back Little Sheba*, have all been, in varying degrees, encouraging reminders of the power of the flatties. All the same, they have been against the general fashion; and when one thinks also of the best European films this year—to take a deliberately assorted sample, *Umberto D*, *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, *Les Belles-de-Nuit*, *The Medium*, *Genevieve*, *Due Soldi di Speranza*—the basic irrelevancy of the new "revolution" is striking. In fact, it seems not inconceivable that in a year or two's time the position will show signs of stabilising itself through the adoption, on a sizeable scale, of widescreen as the commercial norm; with, at one end, Cinerama and the rest exploited on a specialised scale and, at the other, the flat screen also exploited for "art house" productions—mainly non-American films.

In which case, no great harm will have been done and, perhaps, the television "menace" will be averted. Though one wonders. A year ago one could have pointed to many things being wrong with the cinema, but the shape of the screen would not have been one of them.

**The
Front
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SOME IDEAS ON THE CINEMA

Cesare Zavattini

The most distinguished writer now working for the cinema, Zavattini is one of the key-figures of the post-war Italian film renaissance, best known for his scenarios for de Sica's films (*Sciuscià*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Miracle in Milan*, *Umberto D.*). The substance of this article, in which he expresses his personal philosophy of cinema, and defines what he considers to be the ultimate aims of neo-realism, is taken from a recorded interview with an Italian journalist. The transcript was first published in *La Rivista del Cinema Italiano* (December, 1952), edited by Luigi Chiarini, and has been edited here. We are very grateful to Pier Luigi Lanza for his assistance in preparing the article and on the translation.

No doubt one's first and most superficial reaction to everyday reality is that it is tedious. Until we are able to overcome some moral and intellectual laziness, in fact, this reality will continue to appear uninteresting. One shouldn't be astonished that the cinema has always felt the natural, unavoidable necessity to insert a "story" in the reality to make it exciting and "spectacular." All the same, it is clear that such a method evades a direct approach to everyday reality, and suggests that it cannot be portrayed without the intervention of fantasy or artifice.

The most important characteristic, and the most important innovation, of what is called neo-realism, it seems to me, is to have realised that the necessity of the "story" was only an unconscious way of disguising a human defeat, and that the kind of imagination it involved was simply a technique of superimposing dead formulas over living social facts. Now it has been perceived that reality is hugely rich, that to be able to look directly at it is enough; and that the artist's task is not to make people moved or indignant at metaphorical situations, but to make them reflect (and, if you like, to be moved and indignant too) on what they and others are doing, on the real things, exactly as they are.

For me this has been a great victory. I would like to have achieved it many years earlier. But I made the discovery only at the end of the war. It was a moral discovery, an appeal to order. I saw at last what lay in front of me, and I understood that to have evaded reality had been to betray it.

Example: Before this, if one was thinking over the idea of a film on, say, a strike, one was immediately forced to invent a plot. And the strike itself became only the background to the film. Today, our attitude would be one of "revelation": we would describe the strike itself, try to work out the largest possible number of human, moral, social, economic, poetic values from the bare documentary fact.

We have passed from an unconsciously rooted mistrust of reality, an illusory and equivocal evasion, to an unlimited trust in things, facts and people. Such a position requires us, in effect, to excavate reality, to give it a power, a communication, a series of reflexes, which until recently we had never thought it had. It requires, too, a true and real interest in what is happening, a search for the most deeply hidden human values; which is why we feel that the cinema must recruit not only intelligent people, but, above all, "living" souls, the morally richest people.

II

The cinema's overwhelming desire to see, to analyse, its

hunger for reality, is an act of concrete homage towards other people, towards what is happening and existing in the world. And, incidentally, it is what distinguishes "neo-realism" from the American cinema.

In fact, the American position is the antithesis of our own; while we are interested in the reality around us and want to know it directly, reality in American films is unnaturally filtered, "purified," and comes out at one or two removes. In America, lack of subjects for films causes a crisis, but with us such a crisis is impossible. One cannot be short of themes while there is still plenty of reality. Any hour of the day, any place, any person, is a subject for narrative if the narrator is capable of observing and illuminating all these collective elements by exploring their interior value.

So there is no question of a crisis of subjects, only of their interpretation. This substantial difference was nicely emphasised by a well-known American producer when he told me:

"This is how *we* would imagine a scene with an aeroplane. The 'plane passes by . . . a machine-gun fires . . . the 'plane crashes. . . . And this is how *you* would imagine it. The 'plane passes by. . . . The 'plane passes by again . . . the 'plane passes by once more . . ."

He was right. But we have still not gone far enough. It is not enough to make the aeroplane pass by three times; we must make it pass by twenty times.

What effects on narrative, then, and on the portrayal of human character, has the neo-realist style produced?

To begin with, while the cinema used to make one situation produce another situation, and another, and another, again and again, and each scene was thought out and immediately related to the next (the natural result of a mistrust of reality), today, when we have thought out a scene, we feel the need to "remain" in it, because the single scene itself can contain so many echoes and reverberations, can even contain all the situations we may need. Today, in fact, we can quietly say: give us whatever "fact" you like, and we will disembowel it, make it something worth watching.

While the cinema used to portray life in its most visible and external moments—and a film was usually only a series of situations selected and linked together with varying success—today the neo-realist affirms that each one of these situations, rather than all the external moments, contains in itself enough material for a film.

Example: In most films, the adventures of two people looking for somewhere to live, for a house, would be shown externally in a few moments of action, but for us

The first Zavattini-de Sica collaboration was on "*Teresa Venerdì*" (1941), the story of a young girl in an orphanage. Magnani and de Sica himself were among the players.



it could provide the scenario for a whole film, and we would explore all its echoes, all its implications.

Of course, we are still a long way from a true analysis of human situations, and one can speak of analysis only in comparison with the dull synthesis of most current production. We are, rather, still in an "attitude" of analysis; but in this attitude there is a strong purpose, a desire for understanding, for belonging, for participating—for living together, in fact.

III

Substantially, then, the question today is, instead of turning imaginary situations into "reality" and trying to make them look "true," to make things as they are, almost by themselves, create their own special significance. Life is not what is invented in "stories"; life is another matter. To understand it involves a minute, unrelenting, and patient search.

Here I must bring in another point of view. I believe that the world goes on getting worse because we are not truly aware of reality. The most authentic position anyone can take up today is to engage himself in tracing the roots of this problem. The keenest necessity of our time is "social attention."

Attention, though, to what is there, *directly*: not through an apologue, however well conceived. A starving man, a humiliated man, must be shown by name and surname; no fable for a starving man, because that is something else, less effective and less moral. The true function of the cinema is not to tell fables, and to a true function we must recall it.

Of course, reality can be analysed by ways of fiction. Fictions can be expressive and natural; but neo-realism, if it wants to be worthwhile, must sustain the moral impulse that characterised its beginnings, in an analytical documentary way. No other medium of expression has the cinema's original and innate capacity for showing things,

that we believe worth showing, as they happen day by day—in what we might call their "dailiness," their longest and truest duration. The cinema has everything in front of it, and no other medium has the same possibilities for getting it known quickly to the greatest number of people.

As the cinema's responsibility also comes from its enormous power, it should try to make every frame of film count, by which I mean that it should penetrate more and more into the manifestations and the essence of reality.

The cinema only affirms its moral responsibility when it approaches reality in this way.

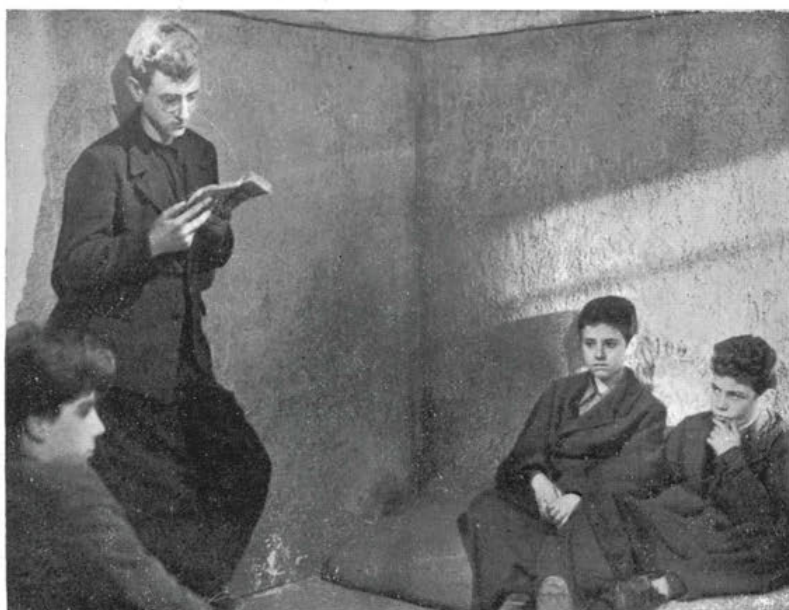
The moral, like the artistic, problem lies in being able to observe reality, not to extract fictions from it.

IV

Naturally, some film-makers, although they realise the problem, have still been compelled, for a variety of reasons (some valid, others not) to "invent" stories in the traditional manner, and to incorporate in these stories some fragments of their real intuition. This, effectively, has served as neo-realism for some film-makers in Italy.

For this reason, the first endeavour was often to reduce the story to its most elementary, simple, and, I would rather say, banal form. It was the beginning of a speech that was later interrupted. *Bicycle Thieves* provides a typical example. The child follows his father along the street; at one moment, the child is nearly run over, but the father does not even notice. This episode was "invented," but with the intention of communicating an everyday fact about these people's lives, a little fact—so little that the protagonists don't even care about it—but full of life.

In fact *Paisà*, *Open City*, *Sciuscia*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *La Terra Trema*, all contain elements of an absolute significance—they reflect the idea that everything can be recounted; but their sense remains metaphorical, because



there is still an invented story, not the documentary spirit. In other films, such as *Umberto D.*, reality as an analysed fact is much more evident, but the presentation is still traditional.

We have not yet reached the centre of neo-realism. Neo-realism today is an army ready to start; and there are the soldiers—behind Rossellini, de Sica, Visconti. The soldiers have to go into the attack and win the battle.

We must recognise that all of us are still only starting, some farther on, others farther behind. But it is still something. The great danger today is to abandon that position, the moral position implicit in the work of many of us during and immediately after the war.

V

A woman is going to buy a pair of shoes. Upon this elementary situation it is possible to build a film. All we have to do is to discover and then show all the elements that go to create this adventure, in all their banal "dailiness," and it will become worthy of attention, it will even become "spectacular." But it will become spectacular not through its exceptional, but through its *normal* qualities; it will astonish us by showing so many things that happen every day under our eyes, things we have never noticed before.

The result would not be easy to achieve. It would require an intensity of human vision both from the creator of the film and from the audience. The question is: how to give human life its historical importance at every minute.

VI

In life, in reality today, there are no more empty spaces. Between things, facts, people, exists such an interdependence that a blow struck for the cinema in Rome could have repercussions all over the world. If this is true, it must be worthwhile to take any moment of a human life and show how "striking" that moment is: to excavate and identify it, to send its echo vibrating into other parts of the world.

This is as valid for poverty as for peace. For peace, too, the human moment should not be a great one, but an ordinary daily happening. Peace is usually the sum of small happenings, all having the same moral implications at their roots.

It is not only a question, however, of creating a film that makes its audience understand a social or a collective situation. People understand themselves better than the social fabric; and to see themselves on the screen, performing their daily actions—remembering that to see oneself gives one the sense of being unlike oneself—like hearing one's own voice on the radio—can help them to fill up a void, a lack of knowledge of reality.

VII

If this love for reality, for human nature directly observed, must still adapt itself to the necessities of the cinema as it is now organised, must yield, suffer and wait, it means that the cinema's capitalist structure still has a tremendous influence over its true function. One can see

"Neo-realism can and must face poverty. We have begun with poverty for the simple reason that it is one of the most vital realities of our time . . ." Above: "*Sciuscià*" (de Sica and Zavattini): centre, "*La Terra Trema*" (Visconti): below, "*Miracolo a Milano*" (de Sica and Zavattini).

this in the growing opposition in many places to the fundamental motives of neo-realism, the main results of which are a return to so-called "original" subjects, as in the past, and the consequent evasion of reality, and a number of bourgeois accusations against neo-realist principles.

The main accusation is: *neo-realism only describes poverty*. But neo-realism can and must face poverty. We have begun with poverty for the simple reason that it is one of the most vital realities of our time, and I challenge anyone to prove the contrary. To believe, or to pretend to believe, that by making half a dozen films on poverty we have finished with the problem, would be a great mistake. As well believe that, if you have to plough up a whole country, you can sit down after the first acre.

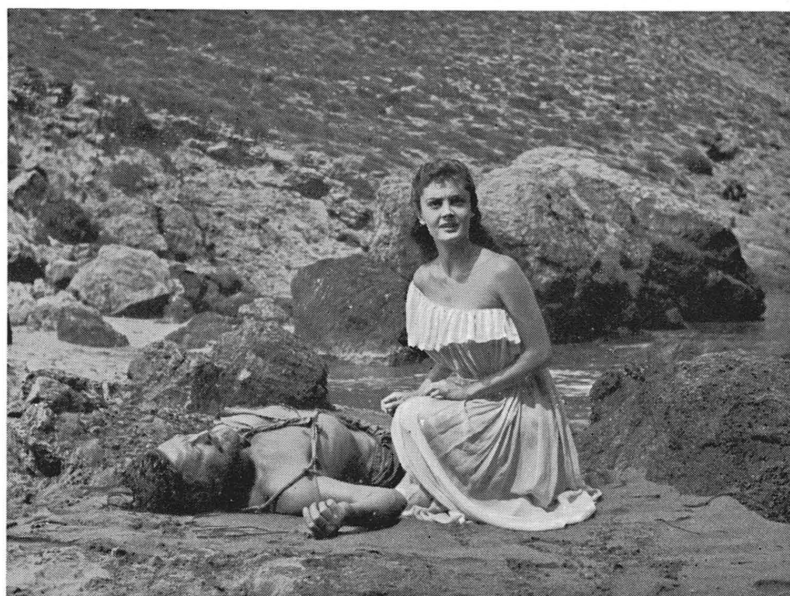
The theme of poverty, of rich and poor, is something one can dedicate one's whole life to. We have just begun. We must have the courage to explore all the details. If the rich turn up their noses especially at *Miracolo a Milano*, we can only ask them to be a little patient. *Miracolo a Milano* is only a fable. There is still much more to say. I put myself among the rich, not only because I have some money (which is only the most apparent and immediate aspect of wealth), but because I am also in a position to create oppression and injustice. That is the moral (or immoral) position of the so-called rich man.

When anyone (he could be the audience, the director, the critic, the State, or the Church) says, "STOP the poverty," i.e. stop the films about poverty, he is committing a moral sin. He is refusing to understand, to learn. And when he refuses to learn, consciously or not, he is evading reality. The evasion springs from lack of courage, from fear. (One should make a film on this subject, showing at what point we begin to evade reality in the face of disquieting facts, at what point we begin to sweeten it.)

If I were not afraid of being thought irreverent, I should say that Christ, had He a camera in His hand, would not shoot fables, however wonderful, but would show us the good ones and the bad ones of this world—in actuality, giving us close-ups of those who make their neighbours' bread too bitter, and of their victims, if the censor allowed it.

To say that we have had "enough" films about poverty suggests that one can measure reality with a chronometer. In fact, it is not simply a question of choosing the theme of poverty, but of going on to explore and analyse the poverty. What one needs is more and more knowledge, precise and simple, of human needs and the motives governing them. Neo-realism should ignore the chronometer and go forward for as long as is necessary.

Neo-realism, it is also said, *does not offer solutions*. The end of a neo-realist film is particularly inconclusive. I cannot accept this at all. With regard to my own work, the characters and situations in films for which I have written the scenario, they remain unresolved from a practical point of view simply because "this is reality." But every moment of the film is, in itself, a continuous answer



A contrast: many other Italian films, particularly co-productions with other countries, do not infringe neo-realist territory. Kirk Douglas as Odysseus and Rossana Podesta as Nausicaa in the Italian-American "Odysseus", directed by Camerini.

to some question. It is not the concern of an artist to propound solutions. It is enough, and quite a lot, I should say, to make an audience feel the need, the urgency, for them.

In any case, what films *do* offer solutions? "Solutions" in this sense, if they are offered, are sentimental ones, resulting from the superficial way in which problems have been faced. At least, in my work I leave the solution to the audience.

The fundamental emotion of *Miracolo a Milano* is not one of escape (the flight at the end), but of indignation, a desire for solidarity with certain people, a refusal of it with others. The film's structure is intended to suggest that there is a great gathering of the humble ones against the others. But the humble ones have no tanks, or they would have been ready to defend their land and their huts.



Another contrast: William Wyler's sentimental comedy "Roman Holiday," with Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck, finds in Rome a romantic setting.

VIII

The true neo-realistic cinema is, of course, less expensive than the cinema at present. Its subjects can be expressed cheaply, and it can dispense with capitalist resources on the present scale. The cinema has not yet found its morality, its necessity, its quality, precisely because it costs too much; being so conditional, it is much less an art than it could be.

IX

The cinema should never turn back. It should accept, unconditionally, what is contemporary. *Today, today, today.*

It must tell reality as if it were a story; there must be no gap between life and what is on the screen. To give an example:

A woman goes to a shop to buy a pair of shoes. The shoes cost 7,000 lire. The woman tries to bargain. The scene lasts, perhaps, two minutes. I must make a 2-hour film. What do I do?

I analyse the fact in all its constituent elements, in its "before," in its "after," in its contemporaneity. The fact creates its own fiction, in its own particular sense.

The woman is buying the shoes. What is her son doing at the same moment? What are people doing in India that could have some relation to this fact of the shoes? The shoes cost 7,000 lire. How did the woman happen to have 7,000 lire? How hard did she work for them, what do they represent for her?

And the bargaining shopkeeper, who is he? What relationship has developed between these two human beings? What do they mean, what interests are they defending, as they bargain? The shopkeeper also has two sons, who eat and speak: do you want to know what they are saying? Here they are, in front of you. . . .

The question is, to be able to fathom the real correspondences between facts and their process of birth, to discover what lies beneath them.

Thus to analyse "buying a pair of shoes" in such a way opens to us a vast and complex world, rich in importance and values, in its practical, social, economic, psychological motives. Banality disappears because each moment is really charged with responsibility. Every moment is infinitely rich. Banality never really existed.

Excavate, and every little fact is revealed as a mine. If the gold-diggers come at last to dig in the illimitable mine of reality, the cinema will become socially important.

This can also be done, evidently, with invented characters; but if I use living, real characters with which to sound reality, people in whose life I can directly participate, my emotion becomes more effective, morally stronger, more useful. Art must be expressed through a true name and surname, not a false one.

I am bored to death with heroes more or less imaginary. I want to meet the real protagonist of everyday life, I want to see how he is made, if he has a moustache or not, if he is tall or short, I want to see his eyes, and I want to speak to him.

We can look at him on the screen with the same anxiety, the same curiosity as when, in a square, seeing a crowd of people all hurrying up to the same place, we ask, What is happening? What is happening to a real person? Neo-realism has perceived that the most irreplaceable experience comes from things happening under our own eyes from natural necessity.

I am against "exceptional" personages. The time has come to tell the audience that they are the true protagonists of life. The result will be a constant appeal to the responsibility and dignity of every human being. Otherwise the frequent habit of identifying oneself with fictional characters will become very dangerous. We must identify ourselves with what we are. The world is composed of millions of people thinking of myths.

X

The term neo-realism—in a very latin sense—implies, too, elimination of technical-professional apparatus, screen-writer included. Handbooks, formulas, grammars, have no more application. There will be no more technical terms. Everybody has his personal shooting-script. Neo-realism breaks all the rules, rejects all those canons which, in fact, only exist to codify limitations. Reality breaks all the rules, as can be discovered if you walk out with a camera to meet it.

The figure of a screen-writer today is, besides, very equivocal. He is usually considered part of the technical apparatus. I am a screen-writer trying to say certain things, and saying them in my own way. It is clear that certain moral and social ideas are at the foundation of my expressive activities, and I can't be satisfied to offer a simple technical contribution. In films which do not touch me directly, also, when I am called in to do a certain amount of work on them, I try to insert as much as possible of my own world, of the moral emergencies within myself.

On the other hand, I don't think the screenplay in itself contains any particular problems; only when subject, screenplay and direction become three distinct phases, as they so often do today, which is abnormal. The screen-writer as such should disappear, and we should arrive at the sole author of a film.

Everything becomes flexible when only one person is making a film, everything continually possible, not only during the shooting, but during the editing, the laying of tracks, the post-synchronisation, to the particular moment when we say, "Stop." And it is only then that we put an end to the film.

Of course, it is possible to make films in collaboration, as happens with novels and plays, because there are always numerous bonds of identity between people (for example, millions of men go to war, and are killed, for the same reasons), but no work of art exists on which someone has not set the seal of his own interest, of his own poetic world. There is always somebody to make the decisive creative act, there is always one prevailing intelligence, there is always someone who, at a certain moment, "chooses," and says, "This, yes," and "This, no," and then resolves it: reaction shot of the Mother crying Help!

Technique and capitalist method, however, have imposed collaboration on the cinema. It is one thing to adapt ourselves to the imposed exigencies of the cinema's present structure, another to imagine that they are indispensable and necessary. It is obvious that when films cost sixpence and everybody can have a camera, the cinema would become a creative medium as flexible and as free as any other.

XI

It is evident that, with neo-realism, the actor—as a person fictitiously lending his own flesh to another—has

The last Zavattini-de Sica collaboration : "Umberto D".



no more right to exist than the "story." In neo-realism, as I intend it, everyone must be his own actor. To want one person to play another implies the calculated plot, the fable, and not "things happening." I attempted such a film with Caterina Rigoglioso; it was called "the lightning film." But unfortunately at the last moment everything broke down. Caterina did not seem to "take" to the cinema. But wasn't she "Caterina"?¹

Of course, it will be necessary to choose themes excluding actors. I want, for example, to make a report on children in the world. If I am not allowed to make it, I will limit it to Europe, or to Italy alone. But I will make it. Here is an example of the film not needing actors. I hope the actors' union will not protest.

XII

Neo-realism does not reject psychological exploration. Psychology is one of the many premises of reality. I face it as I face any other. If I want to write a scene of two men quarrelling, I will not do so at my desk. I must leave my den and find them. I take these men and make them talk in front of me for one hour or for twenty, depending on necessity. My creative method is first to call on them, then to listen to them, "choosing" what they say. But I do all this not with the intention of creating heroes, because I think that a hero is not "certain men" but "every man."

Wanting to give everyone a sense of equality is not levelling him down, but exalting his solidarity. Lack of solidarity is always born from presuming to be different, from a *But*: "Paul is suffering, it's true, I am suffering, too, *but* my suffering has something that . . . my nature has something that . . ." and so on. The *But* must disappear, and we must be able to say: "That man is

¹ Zavattini has now begun work on this film again, as one of the episodes in a new film journal called "The Spectator." Various Italian directors (among them Antonioni, Emmer and Lattuada) are contributing to the first number, *Amore in Città*, each sketch of which deals with an aspect of life in a great city. Zavattini's story of Caterina Rigoglioso tells of a few hours in the life of a woman before she decides to abandon her baby.

bearing what I myself should bear in the same circumstances."

XIII

Others have observed that the best dialogue in films is always in dialect. Dialect is nearer to reality. In our literary and spoken language, the synthetic constructions and the words themselves are always a little false. When writing a dialogue, I always think of it in dialect, in that of Rome or my own village. Using dialect, I feel it to be more essential, truer. Then I translate it into Italian, thus maintaining the dialect's syntax. I don't therefore, write dialogue in dialect, but I am interested in what dialects have in common: immediacy, freshness, verisimilitude.

But I take most of all from nature. I go out into the street, catch words, sentences, discussions. My great aids are memory and the shorthand writer.

Afterwards, I do with the words what I do with the images. I choose, I cut the material I have gathered to give it the right rhythm, to capture the essence, the truth. However great a faith I might have in imagination, in solitude, I have a greater one in reality, in people. I am interested in the drama of things we happen to encounter, not those we plan.

In short, to exercise our own poetic talents on location, we must leave our rooms and go, in body and mind, out to meet other people, to see and understand them. This is a genuine moral necessity for me and, if I lose faith in it, so much the worse for me.

I am quite aware that it is possible to make wonderful films, like Charlie Chaplin's, and they are not neo-realistic. I am quite aware that there are Americans, Russians, Frenchmen and others who have made masterpieces that honour humanity, and, of course, they have not wasted film. I wonder, too, how many more great works they will again give us, according to their particular genius, with actors and studios and novels. But Italian filmmakers, I think, if they are to sustain and deepen their cause and their style, after having courageously half-opened their doors to reality, must (in the sense I have mentioned) open them wide.

Actor on CinemaScope

Mr. Mel Ferrer, who has been in England to play King Arthur in M.G.M.'s CinemaScope *Knights of the Round Table* (with Robert Taylor as Lancelot, Ava Gardner as Guinevere, the film a costume Technicolor spectacle in the *Ivanhoe* tradition), is both an actor and a director. The first films in which he appeared, *Lost Boundaries* and *The Brave Bulls*, were "offbeat" ones that earned him critical recognition but not wide popularity; now that has come too with *Scaramouche* and the charming *Lili*. He directed *Girl of the Limberlost* and, while under contract to Howard Hughes, *The Secret Fury*, and was also called in to settle *Vendetta*, as well as acting as assistant in Mexico to John Ford on *The Fugitive*. Now acting in the first CinemaScope film to be shot in England, his views on 3-D, wide screen and the rest clearly embrace both sides of the camera.

About 3-D, he is firmly deprecatory, "I think they've killed it with bad films, and it's not a very interesting process anyway. It'll die soon, maybe within a year." He mentioned the fact that Warners, after having announced a full-scale 3-D programme, had suddenly switched it to WarnerSuperScope (their own CinemaScope); that Fox, after announcing they would produce nothing but CinemaScope films, had concluded a special deal with a producer to make "flat" films for them; that the second crop of 3-D films in America were not having the box-office success of the first; and, "besides, television will have colour and 3-D pretty soon, and then it will be fire eating fire again. . . ."

CinemaScope? Mr. Ferrer has been informed that he owns "a CinemaScope face." He is not quite sure what this means, "except that my face looks wider on the wide screen." He felt the process could be effective for certain kinds of film, mainly spectacle ones—*Knights of the Round Table* was an obvious example—but not for straight or intimate drama. "You can see that already with some of the films they've projected on wide screens. The distortion aside, they haven't gained anything." He doubted whether CinemaScope would catch on in Europe; most countries, apart from anything else, lacked the capital. I mentioned that, as a result of the CinemaScope demonstrations in London, a total of about 200 applications from all over the country had been reported for the new apparatus to be installed. "Well, maybe that's the kind of proportion it should be. I think perhaps Europe will stabilise the situation, a good deal depends on the reaction here. . . ."

About 100 caparisoned Arthurian Knights were riding on to the large Elstree set, which represented a piece of barren

moorland. As for acting on CinemaScope, Mr. Ferrer remarked, the process tended to broaden one's effects; with fewer changes of angles, fewer close shots, it was more like acting for the theatre. In the case of *Knights of the Round Table*, the situation was complicated by the film being shot in two versions—"flat" and CinemaScope—with two cameras side by side turning simultaneously. The shooting script is the same in each case, so if CinemaScope offers a new medium of expression we shall have to wait a little for that. In this case, did he act for the "flat" or the CinemaScope screen? I asked. "For CinemaScope." He saw both sets of rushes whenever possible.

At that moment Mr. Ferrer was called to speak some lines, off-screen, for a scene with Modred (Stanley Baker), heading a line of Knights drawn up on the moor. The studio stage was drenched in artificial fog, blown from three efficient machines and fanned thickly into the air. Soon the extras mounted on their pawing horses became remotely blurred outlines, a yellow, a blue, a scarlet plume could be glimpsed upright and solitary in the gloom. The two cameras recorded the scene, which lasted about a minute, from a single set-up. Looking through the viewfinders of each, one could see that, while the CinemaScope lens encompassed the whole line, giving an effective impression of numbers receding into the misty distance, the "flat" lens lost about a third of the Knights and a sizeable amount of perspective.

"We're shooting in a less conventional CinemaScope manner than *The Robe*," Mr. Ferrer said. "A lot more coverage—more close shots. It's partly for the ordinary screen vision, but partly because Dick Thorpe, the director, believes you can use more cutting, more changes, than they thought at first."

A few moments later the horses were ordered to charge into the fog; an operation difficult to manoeuvre, since they had to pull up again rather suddenly to avoid running into the opposite wall of the studio, draped with a cloud backcloth, and yet give the impression of a quick sweep of movement. An opposing line of Knights, Mr. Ferrer remarked, had had to do the same thing in the morning. "They'd thought of going to Ireland for it—there's the right mist there—but you'd never be able to match up a sequence. So . . ."

He talked about a plan of his own, to direct a screenplay he was now writing, with a Finnish setting, later in the year. He was going to discuss it with a Scandinavian producer shortly. He liked the northerly setting and its atmosphere—"it has vitality. You don't find that everywhere." It would be on the ordinary size screen, in black and white. Then he went back for a retake of the scene with Modred, and the fog came up again.

GAVIN LAMBERT.



Actor on CinemaScope. Mel Ferrer as King Arthur in "Knights of the Round Table": left hand corner, Robert Taylor as Lancelot.



"Shane": the funeral sequence. Ellen Corby, Jean Arthur, Brandon de Wilde and Alan Ladd (Shane).

SHANE and GEORGE STEVENS

Penelope Houston

Since the American cinema first chose a man astride a horse with a six-shooter in his hand as its favourite hero—as, if you like, the symbolic American hero—the pattern of the Western has set hard and fast. The conventions are rigid in this romanticised, legendary world, where the mysterious stranger rides time and again to the help of the oppressed, the good man is a little quicker on the draw than the bad man, the U.S. cavalry traditionally arrives in time, and the bar-room shooting or the man-hunt through the hot, deserted streets of a hundred little towns puts a decisive end to all arguments. But there are films which, working within and through these conventions, establish also a reality of their own. The people of Tombstone in *My Darling Clementine*, the cavalry detachment of *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, the pioneering adventurers of *Wagonmaster*, the scared and apathetic townsfolk of *High Noon*, all inhabit a particular territory at a particular moment in its history. With *Shane*, George Stevens adds another to these films, to the Westerns which are more than an exciting game between the cavalry and the Indians, or the sheriff and the rustlers.

Shane, written by the novelist A. B. Guthrie Jr., who won a Pulitzer Prize for his *The Way West*, from a novel by Jack Schaefer, takes for its plot a classically simple

situation. Shane (Alan Ladd) is a stranger, a mystery man, a gunfighter from the rougher and tougher Western past, who in 1890 tries to settle down in a little community of Wyoming homesteaders. He joins forces with the honest, hard-working Joe Starrett (Van Heflin), leader of the settlers in their resistance to Ryker, a weather-beaten old rancher who has fought the Indians for the land, raised his cattle on it, and stubbornly holds out against the government-backed invasion of the "sod busters", with their crops and fences. The drive to the frontier has ended, and already the men who led the way are out of date. From the opening of the film—the first intimation of violence, when Starrett's nine-year-old son playfully pulls the trigger of his unloaded rifle and the gunman Shane whips round, six-shooter at the ready—the savage solution in action is inevitable. Shane takes out his gleaming pistol to give the boy a lesson and, in an electrifying, explosive instant of noise and speed, the trained killer reveals himself; Starrett stiffens the wavering resistance of the homesteaders; Ryker, after Shane and Starrett outlast his own men in a fist fight, calls in a hired gunman (Jack Palance), a vicious, pale-faced, smiling villain. Shane, the professional, accepts as his own the responsibility of defending the community. The six-shooter comes out again, he rides off alone and in the traditional, dim-lit

bar-room setting executes—rather than fights, for the scene is brutally brief—Ryker and his gunhand. But by the act of killing Shane has stepped back into the lawless frontier world; the killer outlaws himself, and so Shane rides away.

The simple story, the legendary hero: this is the Western tradition. But in developing his narrative George Stevens employs an unusually sophisticated technique; we see Shane not always as he is—a man who has killed too often, and knows it—but as he appears to the hero-worshipping small boy. As Brandon de Wilde adoringly stares, childishly imitates, drawls out the name “Shane” on a note of proud, possessive wonder, the harsh, uncompromising story takes on its own overtones of romance. For, its hero apart, *Shane* does not idealise the West. Here are no wide open spaces, no thundering stage coaches en route to romantic destinations, but a tiny, isolated community, cut off by a towering mountain range, sustaining its lonely conflict not with single-minded determination but in fear and uncertainty. The mountains are the Wyoming Grand Tetons, and in long shot they provide a constant setting to the action: a jagged, barren range, backed often by grey, misty clouds. In the beautifully handled sequence of the funeral on the hillside, Stevens characteristically combines close-ups—the faces of the women mourners, a man sadly playing a harmonica, the horses and children shuffling uneasily—with extreme long shots, taking in the wooden shacks of the village, the sweep of the valley, the forbidding mountain range. And one may contrast the Fourth of July celebration with the dance in *My Darling Clementine*; John Ford’s village party was lyrical and tender in mood; here, the finery seems a little pathetic, the dancing a little awkward. *Shane* has sympathy and affection enough, but it is the harshness of the life that strikes home.

To convey this sense of the time, the place and the people, and the historical and economic forces working inevitably through them, Stevens has packed his film with detail: the texture has a quite remarkable density. Women and children gather for a cheerful morning ride into town, Shane and Starrett strain to clear the ground for crops, the little boy stalks a deer, a girl in the store tries on a bonnet; and, on the other side, the gunman sits in the bar flexing his hands like a pianist and, as a child raises her hand to wave a greeting when a man’s body, strapped to his horse, passes a farm, her elder sister gently hushes her. One sequence particularly stands out, that of the murder of Torrey (Elisha Cook Jr.), the cocky little Southerner who is still fighting the Civil War. Palance sits, relaxed but watchful, outside the village store as Torrey edges towards him, slipping on the damp, muddy ground. The scene, stormy and overcast, is suddenly swept by a brilliant flash of sunlight; Torrey stammers out his challenge and the killer, contemptuously, reaches for his gun. The scenes of violence, the savagely bloody slugging match in the bar, the gun battles, are all staged rather after this manner: a menacing build-up precedes a harsh, explosive burst of action. At these moments, one can wholly believe in Shane himself. For the rest, the laconic, wooden-faced Alan Ladd seems simply not equal to the stature of the part. He suggests neither the quality of romantic mystery which should accompany Shane, nor the magnetic personality which so effortlessly wins the love of Mrs. Starrett and of Joey; and this

negative performance at its centre cannot but throw the film off balance. Of the other players, Van Heflin gives a doggedly honest, clear-cut performance as the archetypal pioneer and Jean Arthur most attractively sketches in the part of the wife, loyal to her husband but reluctantly drawn to the silent Shane. John Dierckes and Ben Johnson ruggedly snarl and fight as Ryker’s henchmen and Ryker himself (Emile Meyer) is allowed eloquently to state his point of view; in A. B. Guthrie’s script the enemy, the man from the lawless past, deserves respect.

Its scenes of violence apart, *Shane* develops at a measured, deliberate pace; Stevens, like some other veteran directors (Wyler and, on occasion, Ford among them), seems to approve a somewhat stately approach to narrative. There are perhaps a few moments when the dialogue might advantageously be speeded up, when the build-up to a climax of action seems a little drawn out; and towards the end, as Starrett prepares to face Ryker, his wife tries to dissuade him and—a needless plot twist—one of Ryker’s men comes to warn Shane, to announce a change of sides, the firmly held rhythm briefly checks and falters. But as a whole the story-telling has a vigorous, concentrated drive, a sense of single-minded authority. Assisted by the fine period sense of Guthrie’s script and by Loyal Griggs’ handsome colour photography, Stevens has impressively enlarged the Western legend; if Shane himself appears a character grandly conceived and inadequately realised, the world of the homesteaders has a quiet, imaginative authenticity rare enough in any film.

One can only protest, though, at the way in which Paramount has tried to enlarge the film itself. As seen at the trade show, on the wide screen of the Plaza cinema, the meticulously careful compositions were mutilated time and again; tops of heads disappeared from the top of the screen, hands were cut off at the wrists at the bottom, gestures vanished out of the frame, the photography suffered in clarity and detail. Worse still, a stereophonic sound track made natural sounds disproportionately loud, over-emphasised Victor Young’s rather undistinguished score and distorted the human voice so that a good deal of the quietly spoken, naturalistic dialogue emerged as a confused mumbling and roaring, and poor Jean Arthur’s voice, at a moment of stress, soared to a tinny wailing. *Shane*, in any case, demands a certain degree of concentration from the audience; in making it a positive strain to watch, one cannot believe that Paramount is notably enhancing its box-office chances.

II

With *Shane*, his first Western, George Stevens consolidates a position as one of Hollywood’s major producer-directors towards which he has been advancing, in a slightly surreptitious fashion, for several years. Stevens, whose grandmother, mother and father were all actors on the American West Coast, made his own stage *début* at the age of four (his father, like Buster Keaton’s, wanted him to be brought up in his trade), and went to Hollywood in the early ’twenties, when he was sixteen, with the original intention of becoming an actor. Instead, he found employment first as a cameraman, working mainly on the comedy shorts of Laurel and Hardy and Harry Langdon, and later as a director of more comedy two-reelers for the Hal Roach studios. His first feature film, made in 1933, was a Jewish-Irish comedy named *The Cohens and Kellys in Trouble* and had, one imagines, more

than a little in common with the two-reelers. In the decade between 1933 and his departure for the army, as a Major in the U.S. Army Signal Corps, George Stevens made seventeen pictures. So short is the life of the average feature film, that of these only four can still be seen in this country: *Quality Street* (1937), with Katharine Hepburn and Fay Bainter; *Vivacious Lady* (1938), a college comedy with Ginger Rogers and James Stewart; *Penny Serenade* (1941), a sentimental domestic piece starring Cary Grant and Irene Dunne; *Talk of the Town* (1942) and *The More the Merrier* (1943) are, unhappily, among the missing.

In retrospect, the films George Stevens directed during the 'thirties seem interesting chiefly for their range of subject and their solid, slightly impersonal efficiency. His period of apprenticeship was short, his polished, careful style was well suited to the higher class of commercial feature, and his films drew attention less to the director than to the stars—Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, Irene Dunne, Fred Astaire, Cary Grant and James Stewart—the big names of the 'thirties and, for that matter, of the 'fifties. After two more second features, *Bachelor Bait* and *Kentucky Kernels*, Stevens in 1935 directed *Laddie*, a sentimental picture from a story by Gene Stratton Porter; the critic of *The Sunday Times* noted, "a true touch of *Arcadia* in the rustic settings." There followed his first substantial success, *Alice Adams*, an only moderately engaging version of Booth Tarkington's small town story; the film's main attraction now is its revelation of the young Katharine Hepburn, already an Oscar winner but still all jagged edges, unfinished gestures and implied promise. In 1936 he made *Swing Time*, a cheerful and lively Astaire-Rogers musical which has weathered the years none too badly, and in 1938 another musical, *A Damsel in Distress*, with Astaire again and a new star, Joan Fontaine; Astaire had few opportunities as a dancer, but the film contained one brilliantly funny sequence set in a hall of distorting mirrors. Stevens' first straight action picture, and his "biggest" of the 'thirties, was *Gunga Din*, remotely derived from Kipling. Apart from some stilted officers' mess dialogue and a truly appalling final scene in which the Colonel declaimed Kipling's poem to the regiment over the corpse of Gunga Din, this was a brisk and vigorous adventure story in the *Bengal Lancer* tradition, energetically packed with torture, thuggery and oriental mystery and culminating in an expertly staged battle scene.

But Stevens, who was by now producing as well as directing his films, seems to have hit his stride, as it were, with three comedies: *Woman of the Year*, *Talk of the Town* and *The More the Merrier*. All three found their starting point in some aspect of contemporary society (the career woman, with Katharine Hepburn as a stupefyingly successful newspaper columnist, the standing war-time joke of the Washington housing shortage and, in the most considered, *Talk of the Town*, the dangers of judicial corruption), all displayed a sophisticated, urbane and at the same time slightly sentimental attitude to life. *Woman of the Year*, the only one of the three to have survived, opened in fine style, took in a delicious scene in which Hepburn, slightly drunk and momentarily under-

Stevens and Katharine Hepburn. Above: with Fred MacMurray in "Alice Adams"; centre, with Fay Bainter in "Quality Street"; below, with Spencer Tracy in "Woman of the Year".





Landlady and lodger during the Washington housing shortage: Charles Coburn and Jean Arthur in "The More the Merrier".

neath the table, clung earnestly to the thread of a conversation about Spengler and Fascism, and then, rather deflatingly, began to take its characters' problems with undue solemnity. It recovered, however, for an unerringly timed final sequence of inspired comedy, in which the career woman, intent on proving her domestic ability, battled increasingly desperately with the implements of a mechanised kitchen. Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn, in their first picture together, played with that intimate, perfectly matched assurance to which later films have accustomed us. *Talk of the Town*, written by Sidney Buchman and Irwin Shaw, was not primarily frivolous. A fair amount of lecturing on corruption and civic duty was adroitly camouflaged by the smooth and civilised surface of the comedy, beautifully played by Jean Arthur, Cary Grant and Ronald Colman. Jean Arthur also starred in *The More the Merrier*, the slight, pleasant, rather unevenly sustained romantic comedy which was Stevens' last film before joining the army.

III

Since the war, George Stevens has made only four films: *I Remember Mama* (for R.K.O.), *A Place in the Sun*, *Something to Live For* and *Shane* (all for Paramount). Of these, *Something to Live For*, a lugubrious story about two alcoholics, played by Ray Milland and Joan Fontaine, who drank, suffered through hangovers and discussed their symptoms in a pseudo-sophisticated Broadway milieu, can be dismissed as an almost unqualified failure. One remembers it mainly for the top-heavy technical apparatus which Stevens, still it seemed under the influence of the long takes and lingering dissolves of *A Place in the Sun*, brought to bear on second-rate material. There is more to be said, though, about *I Remember Mama*. John van Druten's play, from a novel by Kathryn Forbes, had been a considerable Broadway success; its reminiscences of episodes in the life of an immigrant Norwegian family in San Francisco, its character studies of the ferocious, kindly old uncle, the timid little aunt, her battle-axe sister, the embryo novelist, delightfully played by Barbara Bel Geddes, and Mama herself (Irene Dunne), the quintessential American mother, had a theatrical, slightly synthetic quality, like a rather good fake antique. Stevens (who is himself, one suspects, some-

thing of a sentimentalist), played up the character sketches for all that they were worth, and sometimes for rather more; taking the film at a slow, reflective pace, he constantly emphasised its reminiscent quality, so that it seemed less like something actual and present than like something affectionately remembered. *I Remember Mama* was an immaculately made film, stylishly set in its period and having, for all its over-sweet flavour, a gentle, nostalgic attraction; never real life, but a likeable imitation.

Stevens' most important film, until *Shane*, was the remarkable and highly controversial *A Place in the Sun*. The picture came to this country in the wake of a tidal wave of publicity; the American Press had been almost uniformly admiring; Chaplin had bestowed the accolade in greeting it unequivocally as "the greatest ever made in Hollywood"—a label impossible to live up to, and hard to live down. The London critics, as though put on their mettle, fell on the film like tigers. Richard Winnington called it "a glossy story . . . the sort of competent romantic melodrama you have seen and forgotten many times"; Fred Majdalany described it as "a Cinderella story with an unhappy ending and delusions of significance"; Milton Shulman, though admitting that "George Stevens has injected an unusual amount of brilliant direction into this ordinary tale", found the film generally "as impersonal as a glossy illustration"; Dilys Powell also described it as "stylistically exceptionally skilful", but ultimately saw only "an exquisitely polished piece of Hollywood amour"; and the critic of the *Manchester Guardian* discerned "mild virtues of tact and taste" in a film "pictorially dull."

I found this reception from the British Press difficult to understand at the time, and I do so still. The cautious, slightly grudging references to "tact and taste" and "brilliant direction" as trimmings to a story generally described as dull or conventional particularly bewildered. It is a little as though one were to be told that Henry James, in *The Portrait of a Lady*, had written a long novel about a girl who married the wrong man, or that Tchekov had written "brilliantly" about some rather dull people. Because, however one regards *A Place in the Sun*, it surely must appear as a work of the most interesting kind, that which imposes on the critic the duty of considering the director's style; first and foremost, this is a director's film, and one cannot evade the issue by praising him in an aside.

Admittedly, the ultimate failure of the film (and it can only be regarded as an unusual and exciting failure) lies in the interpretation it gives to Theodore Dreiser's novel, *An American Tragedy*. By bringing events forwards from the 'twenties to the 1950's, by softening and romanticising two of the leading characters, George Eastman (Montgomery Clift) and Angela Vickers (Elizabeth Taylor), by playing up the love story at the expense of the social criticism which was the mainspring of Dreiser's novel, the film seriously weakens its own dramatic impact. The title change, indeed, points the shift in emphasis: *An American Tragedy* has become *A Place in the Sun*. Circumstances, insurmountable social barriers, the hopeless pursuit of illusory material success, were, for Dreiser, the tragedy; in the film, the world of the rich Eastmans appears as a great, glittering prize, snatched from George's impatient grasp less by fate, or by overpowering social pressures, than by bad luck and bad judgment. His predicament—



A sequence from
A PLACE IN THE SUN

1. From the Eastmans' dance, George telephones to his mother at the mission house ; Angela watches.

6. Later, George and Angela are still dancing.



2. George's mother answers the telephone.

7. Close up of the same.



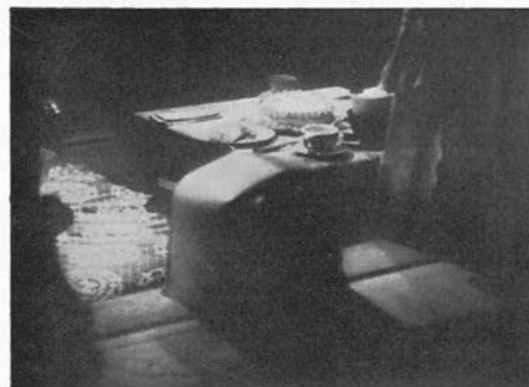
3. George and Angela : the end of the telephone conversation.

8. Dissolving from reverse angle of 7, to Alice Tripp's front door.



4. George and Angela return to the dance floor.

9. Detail of Alice Tripp's bedroom ; the wireless, and the cake prepared for George's birthday party.



5. The image of George's mother momentarily superimposed over this shot.

10. Long shot of Alice as she waits for George.



to be loved by a rich girl and tied to a poor and troublesome one—could, in the novel, be resolved only in violence; in *A Place in the Sun* the scenes that follow the drowning of poor, helpless, infuriating Alice Tripp (Shelley Winters) lose a good deal of their force just because the problem she presented has never really appeared insoluble. And we have such uneasy final moments as Angela's farewell visit to the death cell (glorifying romantic love) and the scene in which, as George walks to the electric chair, his fellow prisoners call to him, promising to "see him on the other side" (glorifying, presumably, the solidarity of the under-privileged or the victims of society, which until then had scarcely seemed a factor in the story).

But the power of the film rests less in the story than in the skill and virtuosity shown in the telling of it. In distilling this vast novel into two hours screen time, Stevens daringly compressed, packing meaning into single shots, or oblique references, such as that momentary street scene which gives us a glimpse of George's whole harsh, puritanical street mission childhood. With a penetrating and unconventional camera technique, Stevens uses the long-held close-up less as a dramatic effect than to advance the narrative by examining character; in the trial scene, he passes by a series of dissolves from one telling close-up of George's face to another, as the flood of words pours over him. And he develops the hours leading up to the drowning of Alice through a series of extreme long shots, alternating with close-ups, as the little boat moves aimlessly across the lake, dusk comes, the scene grows darker and sadder. One remembers too the repeated sound effects, caught and reiterated to underline mood and situation—the dog barking, the arrogant, commanding note of Angela's car horn, the shrill, melancholy cry of the loon, first heard by the lake and recurring during the trial to shattering effect.

Notably, one may select three scenes: George, on his first visit to his rich relatives (the social awkwardness of the moment bitingly emphasised), electrified by the sight of the gay, dazzlingly assured Angela; the Eastmans' dance, when a telephone call to George's fanatical, over-worked mother interrupts the billiards game and later, as the couple walk through the ornately handsome room, the superimposition of her ravaged face over the shot links, momentarily, George's past and his future; and the bitter dialogue between George and Alice when he comes late to her pathetic little birthday party and the camera shoots past the backs of the characters across the dismal boarding house room, so that nothing distracts from the pitiful, unhappy dialogue. And, Montgomery Clift's fine performance apart, it is worth comment that Stevens obtains here from Elizabeth Taylor and Shelley Winters playing of a tenderness and intensity well outside their customary range.

The film perhaps sets its sights too high, the script attempts tragedy and falters into melodrama, and there are moments when Stevens slips into a conventional, and in its context disconcerting, Hollywood glibness of style. A failure, undeniably, but "*the sort of competent, romantic melodrama you have seen and forgotten many times*", a "*polished piece of Hollywood amour*"; pace Mr. Winnington and Miss Powell, I cannot think so.

IV

With *A Place in the Sun*, the practised, efficient crafts-

man finally unmasked his batteries, revealing himself also as a creative personality to be reckoned with; *Shane* strikingly reinforces the impression. But just what kind of a personality neither these two very dissimilar films, nor the rather heavy, genial face of his photographs, go far towards indicating. That a director who had come up through the film industry in the traditional way and who had behind him a long run of agreeable, not very important and slightly anonymous commercial successes should venture upon the stylistic innovations of *A Place in the Sun* in itself surprises. But in his post-war films Stevens has, as it were, taken command of his material; he has acquired the grand manner, the note of unmistakable authority. There is a magisterial quality about *Shane*.

Recently, Stevens has left Paramount. *Shane* cost over three million dollars and the company, like several others, has lately been taking in sail, cutting down on the expensive talent under contract. He has formed an independent company for which he plans to make a frontier story to be called *Comancheros*; and for Warner Brothers, in their clumsily named wide screen process, WarnerSuperScope, he will film Edna Ferber's Texas novel *Giant*. He wants, he says, to "aggrandise" the Western legend, and he has been quoted as suggesting that the Western pioneers fill, for Americans, something of the place occupied by King Arthur and his Knights in British mythology; in *Shane* he has tried to create such a hero. But directors who are technical perfectionists, who work on a big, expensive scale and who distrust the novelty of 3-D (for which Stevens has expressed strong, emphatic dislike), seem likely to be in for a somewhat difficult time in Hollywood. In any case, although George Stevens has been in the film business for more than thirty years and has been a director for twenty of them, one cannot sum up his career, neatly to round off an article. Two impressive films have brought him professionally to the top and, he says, "*I mean to be in pictures a long time. . .*"



Beat the Devil



Top : Jennifer Jones, Humphrey Bogart,
Gina Lollobrigida.
Centre : Robert Morley, Ivor Barnard,
Marco Tulli and Peter Lorre.
Below : Peter Lorre, Marco Tulli, Ivor
Barnard.

John Huston's new film is described as a "comedy adventure". The characters include an American (Humphrey Bogart) and his Italian wife (Gina Lollobrigida), an Englishman (Edward Underdown) and his blonde, scatterbrained wife (Jennifer Jones), and a gang of raffish and picturesque crooks (led by Peter Lorre, Robert Morley and Ivor Barnard), and much of the action takes place in and around Ravello, where the film was shot on location.

"The formula of *Beat the Devil*", its director remarks, "is that everyone is slightly absurd. The crooks, ostensibly heroic people, the romance, even virtue, becomes absurd. Adventurers are rather out-of-date, hence the suggestion of satire, although the film itself cannot be described as satirical." It is closer in spirit to *The Maltese Falcon*, he adds, as these bizarre and dramatic groupings suggest.





SHADOW UPON SHADOW UPON SHADOW

*Hugh Walpole
in
Hollywood*

Gavin Lambert

*Hugh Walpole as the vicar
of Blunderstone in "David
Copperfield"*

It was at the beginning of the 20's, as American films began their conquest of the world market, that producers in Hollywood decided they would like to buy a few distinguished authors and bring new prestige to the medium; and the most determined effort to purchase, wholesale as it were, men of letters, was characteristically made by Sam Goldwyn, who formed The Eminent Authors Inc. for this purpose. Alva Johnston in *The Great Goldwyn* recounts that the "first consignment of genius" to arrive included Rex Beach, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Gertrude Atherton and Leroy Scott. Rival producers countered with some notable importations: Elinor Glyn, Arnold Bennett, Somerset Maugham. Unwilling to relinquish the last word, Goldwyn approached (unsuccessfully) Shaw and (successfully) Maurice Maeterlinck. The legend persists that, installed in California, the Belgian poet set to work on an adaptation of his *Life of the Bee*, and that, on receiving the typescript scenario, Goldwyn ran screaming out of his office: "My God, the hero is a bee!" The Eminent Authors Inc., at any rate, was disbanded shortly after this alleged incident, though not before a pattern of experience for the novelist in Hollywood had been set. Of the 20's importations, Miss Glyn provided a happy consequence in Clara Bow, and one of Goldwyn's less "literary" Eminent, the actor-playwright Rupert Hughes, feathered a successful money-maker, *The Old Nest*, for him; the rest, rather quickly, went East.

Hollywood, all the same, has continued to buy Eminent Authors, and the frustrated novelist in Hollywood, his best work corrupted by insensitive producers, miscasting, specialists in "additional dialogue" and the Hays office, his own talent wasted on scripting novelettes or musicals, is by now a subject amply explored. The experiences of Scott Fitzgerald, which provided an archetypal object

lesson, were chronicled in this magazine eighteen months ago. This object lesson, alas, is that all the serious novelist, if he is genuinely interested in the cinema, should expect from Hollywood is a form of human sacrifice, generously paid for, it may be, but emotionally insulting; or, if he is the kind of novelist that Fitzgerald himself described so brilliantly in *The Last Tycoon* as Boxley, he will work in rather superior fashion on treatments of literary classics and, later, write articles on the decadence of Hollywood and the impossibility of films there ever becoming works of art.

Perhaps Hollywood expected something of a Boxley when it invited Hugh Walpole in 1935 to work on the script of an elaborately planned production of *David Copperfield*. On the surface, at least, a distinguished best-selling writer with very distinguished literary connections, and a vice-president of the Dickens Fellowship, was the obvious kind of "name" to set a seal of dignified authority upon a film with cultural as well as commercial pretensions; did David O. Selznick, the producer, imagine at first that Walpole would do a great deal more than give his name to the credit titles, make a few suggestions about somebody else's adaptation, and advise on details of Dickensiana? Outwardly, indeed, Walpole's contribution to *David Copperfield*, and his subsequent work in Hollywood, seems to have no more implications than Aldous Huxley's stint on *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre* (Fitzgerald wrote that he modelled "Boxley" on Huxley); but inwardly it has its interest as a note in the margin of Anglo-American film history.

II

Walpole (unlike Fitzgerald) arrived in Hollywood when he was a best-selling novelist in his prime. He was 51, having published his first novel at the age of 27; the suc-

cesses of Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, *The Cathedral*, *The Old Ladies*, four *Herries* and two *Jeremy* books were behind him; his literary friendships had included Henry James, Conrad, Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, Virginia Woolf; he had been painted by John and Sickert, sculpted by Epstein; he had been enthusiastically monographed by Marguerite Steen and Clemence Dane; and unkindly caricatured (as Alroy Kear) by Maugham in *Cakes and Ale*. He was not, and never would be, a first-rate or even a particularly interesting novelist, but he had a fluent and seemingly inexhaustible narrative gift, he was immensely, almost sinisterly, prolific, he had the best-selling writer's solid persuasiveness and expansive grasp; and he was, as Rupert Hart-Davis shows in his fascinating biography, an extraordinary person. His vivacity, his widely absorbing curiosity about all kinds of people, places and things, his naïve but irresistible eagerness to be loved and accepted, his rather desperate self-buttonholing attempts to be honest about himself and his relationships, his yearly compilations of lists of his best friends in order of preference, all these expressed a generous and active nature that endeared him to writers and artists considerably more talented than himself.

The arrival of the extraordinary person in Hollywood was, perhaps, more like a visit from royalty than the occasion of that mutual, mistrustful caginess which usually marks a talented fashionable novelist taking up residence there. Walpole had, besides, been there briefly before, having performed three enormously successful lecture tours of America in 1919, 1922 and 1926. On the first tour, he visited Hollywood from Los Angeles, and received offers to write for the studios, but was more interested in inspecting Stevenson's house at Monterey; on the second, he met Robert Flaherty, who had recently finished *Nanook of the North*, which filled him with a desire to go to Greenland, and Charlie Chaplin (who did an imitation of one of his lectures), and was taken to watch a rodeo by Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks; on the 1926 tour, he saw *Beau Geste* (with Ronald Colman) for the second time, in Washington, and wept, being "as much moved as the first, and my tears spoiled my collar," met Fairbanks again in Los Angeles, visited a film studio with him, and discussed the possibility of returning in a year or so's time as historical adviser on Fairbanks' productions.

But he did not return to work in Hollywood until nine years and 11 novels later, sailing on the *Ile de France* with David Selznick and George Cukor, producer and director of the forthcoming *David Copperfield*. He was fêted in New York, and arrived in California two weeks later, where he immediately caught cold and had to go into hospital for a sinus operation. On recovery, he signed a contract with M.G.M. (£200 a week plus expenses) to work on *Copperfield* and perhaps another film for the next four months. The scenario of *Copperfield*, a draft of an adaptation by Howard Estabrook, who had won fame and an Oscar for his script of *Cimarron*, was then still in its very early stages.

The Hollywood in which Walpole was to remain for some time was then in its mid-30's prosperity, and financial security was reflected in the cult of "prestige" by many leading producers, notably Selznick himself, who had led the way to dignified and tastefully upholstered versions of "classics" with his highly popular *Little Women*. The year 1935 was Hollywood's *annus* in its way *mirabilis*, of

the cultured prestige picture, and witnessed production work in various stages on *Becky Sharp*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Les Misérables*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, *Cardinal Richelieu*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Jalna*, *Anna Karenina*, *Louis Pasteur*, *Clive of India*, *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*—and *David Copperfield*. A Walpole work was also, remotely, filmed that year: *Kind Lady*, with Aline MacMahon and Basil Rathbone, adapted from a play by Jerome Chodorov and Joseph Fields based on Walpole's story, *The Silver Mask*, about a trusting middle-aged lady betrayed by her evil butler. (It was filmed again in 1950, with Ethel Barrymore and Maurice Evans.)

"Very interesting, but most exasperating . . ." Walpole was soon writing home. Long and perplexing script conferences on *Copperfield* soon became the order of the day—"I work without ceasing from 10 to 6"—and he took them, characteristically, with great conscientiousness. The script was redrafted seven times, and "still it is no better than the first"; there was much trouble with the character of Steerforth, who was alternately in and out, and at one conference "the whole of the second half of the script was pulled to pieces, and hysterical requests were made for me to make something interesting out of Agnes"; Laughton was signed to play Micawber, then replaced by W. C. Fields; at the end of August, after six weeks of this, it was officially announced (for the sixth time) that the script was finished; and (for the seventh) the announcement was countermanded. "Again and again we go back over every sentence, even over every word, and it is no easy thing for me, who have for so long done *what* I liked *how* I liked, to fit in with all these different people." No easy thing in itself, one imagines, too, to revise: Walpole seldom did this with his novels. *David Copperfield* had started shooting before, in mid-September, the script was finally approved, having cost Walpole some moments of hysteria and at least one threat to go home, and M.G.M., for his services on it, about £2,000 plus expenses.

Between times, Walpole managed to make a few friends and visit famous stars. He adored Katharine Hepburn (in *Little Women*)—"she is divine—no other word for it"—and rode with her in an open truck to a pre-view; he dined with Chaplin, Laughton, Colman, Wallace Beery, Norma Shearer and Ann Harding, pronouncing the latter two's homes "exquisitely beautiful," and finding it "lovely to sit under the moon at midnight and watch these beautiful creatures with practically nothing on play tennis under artificial light." Also, it was a great relief that "no one here cares a hang about the relative merits of English writers . . ."

On a more personal level, Walpole formed lasting attachments to Cukor, to the Danish actor Jean Hersholt (later *Dr. Christian* to the Dionne quintuplets), a bibliophile like himself, and to Richard Boleslawsky. Boleslawsky, who died in 1937, was born in Poland, had worked in the Moscow Arts Theatre and served as a Polish lancer. He arrived in Hollywood in the late 20's, suffered near-starvation for a year, and the career of this cultured, handsome exile as a film director was odd and unsatisfactory. "I'm sure Hollywood killed him." Walpole wrote later:

"He was quite unfitted to make pictures, although

he put all his poetry and theatrical genius into them. He couldn't endure the tyranny of the studio bosses (who hated him) or the commercial greed. But especially what killed him was the unsatisfactory nature of the pictures themselves. The beauties he put into them were so ephemeral, and he was heartbroken with disappointment again and again. . . ."

How much personal affection—during the 1940 air raids on London, when Walpole slept in a shelter every night in the garden of his Hampstead house, and carried down there a number of favourite personal belongings, Boleslawsky's photograph was among them—led Walpole to overrate the "poetry and theatrical genius", it is difficult to say. Judging by the other films we know he enjoyed, perhaps not so very much. Boleslawsky directed a curious group of films, most of them pretentiously mediocre, including *Rasputin and the Empress* (co-starring the three Barrymores), *Les Misérables* (with Laughton and Fredric March), *The Painted Veil* (Garbo), *Clive of India*, a crazy comedy, *Theodora Goes Wild*, and one of the cinema's enduring masterpieces of arty absurdity, the Dietrich-Boyer *Garden of Allah*. One has no doubt he was a charming and a cultivated person, and his textbook on acting, his autobiographical *Way of a Lancer*, have undeniable qualities; unfortunately he was usually assigned to "cultured" films, with fairly disastrous results.

Boleslawsky was preparing *Clive of India* while Walpole was working on *Copperfield*; the subject appears to have intrigued Walpole, who was taken by patriotic historical films. In his book *Hollywood by Starlight*, the script-writer and biographer of Clive, R. J. Minney, describes a conversation between himself, Walpole and Ronald Colman, on the subject of the latter shaving off his moustache for the picture. Clive had no moustache, but Colman's was famous and beloved, and there was a dispute as to whether it should be removed in the cause of history or retained in the cause of box-office. Minney favoured the latter, which caused Walpole to explode. "You don't mean to tell me, Minney, that you of all people— My dear fellow, it would have been all right for me or Colman or anybody else to suggest it—but the biographer! Of course he must shave his moustache. He owes it to history!" The next morning, Colman's appearance showed that he had acknowledged the debt.

Assuredly it was "very interesting and exasperating"; but Walpole's vitality and capacity for fascination—Minney was astonished at his enthusiastic knowledge of "telescopes and foreign politics"—allowed him, in spite of exasperations, to enjoy it hugely. He played a small part in *David Copperfield*, as the ponderous Vicar of Blunderstone whose sermon caused the young David to drowse in his pew. Hart-Davis relates that the scene was retaken eight times, and each time Walpole preached "a different and wholly impromptu sermon." Later it was discovered that Selznick and Cukor had deliberately ordered the retakes in an attempt "to dry Hugh up, but they little knew their man."

Immediately after this, he set to work, with Lenore Coffee, on the adaptation of his *Herries* novel, *Vanessa*, to which M.G.M. had acquired the rights. It was finished in hardly more than a month, and delighted everyone, including Louis B. Mayer, who summoned Walpole to his office. This one of "the Three Kings of Hollywood," Walpole commented,

"made me a speech saying I combined the qualities of fine character and great ability! I felt like a schoolboy

of ten—but the result is that I have signed a contract for next year for six months at a fabulously high salary. No less than Two Hundred and Fifty Pounds per week! . . . This climate suits my diabetes to perfection."

And so, after contracting arthritis in his right wrist, which prevented him writing for two months and, presumably, postponed the possibility of working on *Kim* and/or *Oliver Twist*, which had been discussed with M.G.M., Walpole returned to England. Nine months, one novel and some autobiographical impressions later, he was back in California. M.G.M., however, were uncertain quite what to do with him. He did a little work on *Kim*, and on a new project, *The Prince and the Pauper*, and was then taken off both. Perhaps his employers' uncertainty encouraged his own; at any rate, he found Hollywood less exotically alive than in the previous year, and increasingly unreal:

"There is more actual positive reality in one square inch of the beach at Scarborough. . . . This is partly the unreality of the pictures, which simply get more unreal, rather than less. It seems to me that they have gone back rather than forward since last year. . . . No wars, no politics, no deaths, make any effect here. We are all on a raft together in the middle of the cinema sea! . . . Nothing is real here but salaries."

For two months, during which he earned £2,000, Walpole discussed the possibility of doing a modern story for M.G.M. with an Oxford setting (*A Yank at Oxford?*), and this, apart from a few days on *Kim* and the Mark Twain project, was all. He wrote a short story, bought books and pictures, and had treatment at a colonic irrigation centre with Edward G. Robinson.

The vacuum was broken by an offer from Selznick, who had now left M.G.M., forming his own company, Selznick International Pictures Inc.; its first production was to be *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (Freddie Bartholomew again), with Walpole solely responsible for the screenplay. Left more to himself than on *Copperfield*, he completed *Fauntleroy* in a month, and was able to spend the time until Christmas seeing Cukor, Boleslawsky and Hersholt and a new writer friend, John Collier, now working for the movies, writing a novel, going to concerts, boxing and wrestling matches, buying more works of art, reading *Moby Dick* and tracking down, with Hersholt's assistance, Melville first editions. The mode of life also encouraged serious thoughts, which he recorded in his journal, about his stature as an artist. (Would he survive? Yes, he concluded, as Gissing, Henry Kingsley, and Maurice Hewlett had done.) H. G. Wells arrived in Hollywood, Chaplin gave a dinner for him, and the distinguished writer, looking "very well and delighted with the pretty women," chucked Walpole amicably under the chin. Wells, Walpole and Paulette Goddard went to visit Randolph Hearst at his huge, monstrous ranch, later to serve as a model for Orson Welles' "Xanadu" in *Citizen Kane*.

"Magnificent tapestries and everywhere marble statues, sham Italian gilt, and a deserted library where the books absolutely weep for neglect. . . . Water buffalo and zebra look in at your bedroom window."

Just before Christmas, M.G.M. once more brought *Kim* off the shelf, and Walpole did some work on the draft of another writer's adaptation.* For the rest, the huge Christmas trees on Hollywood Boulevard, shimmering with electric lights, enchanted him; and Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were a series of parties—at the Hersholts,

* *Kim* did not reach the screen until 1950. Three writers, Walpole not among them, are mentioned on the credit titles.

Betsey Trotwood protects David :
Freddie Bartholomew (David),
Lennox Pawle (Mr. Dick), Edna
May Oliver (Aunt Betsey), Basil
Rathbone (Mr. Murdstone) and
Violet Kemble Cooper (Jane Murd-
stone) in "David Copperfield".



then at the Boleslawskys, and finally at Cukor's. Throughout January he was still working on *Kim*. He noted in his journal:

"I'm beginning to think of *money* more than at any time in my life before. . . . This isn't life at all—it's shadow upon shadow upon shadow."

III

Of the three films scripted by Walpole in Hollywood, all with Victorian settings, *David Copperfield* is certainly the most substantial and interesting. Of *Vanessa*, I have only a blurred memory (a copy no longer exists in this country), mainly of the highly sprung and richly upholstered scenes of the heroine (Helen Hayes) discovering that her tempestuous husband (Otto Kruger) is going mad; it is comforting to see that *Film Weekly*, at that time my arbiter supreme, described this as "emotionally compelling." *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, which someone at the time justly called a "nostalgic orgy," brings back a flavour of gentility that Hollywood, not altogether for the good, has now quite discarded. The archetypal mother's boy—a subject, bearing in mind the *Jeremy* books, that may have been quite close to Walpole's heart—is understandably made a little less *odd* on the screen: no flowing curls, enormous lace collars and embroidered velvet suiting, that is to say. In Freddie Bartholomew's able though rather precocious performance, he becomes, too, more of a "lad" and less of an angel child. The settings are tasteful, the direction (John Cromwell) soft and slow, and Dolores Costello's melting, clinging "Dearest," Aubrey Smith's crusty and gouty old aristocrat with a heart secretly pounding for love, are all that could be desired.

Today, when the most serious approach to literary adaptation is "cinematographic" (Welles' *Macbeth* and *Othello*, David Lean's Dickens films), the style of *David Copperfield* may seem out-moded. There is no attempt to make it "cinema," no formal pattern imposed on the narrative surface; and yet, re-seen, one may claim it to be

still the most successful Dickens-film yet made. Most notably, it is not afraid of the exuberance, the grotesquerie and the direct sentiment of Dickens' world. (A certain withdrawal from these, one feels, is implicit in the refinements of Lean's films.) *David Copperfield* is made with a fine attack, and the opening piece of bravura—Betsey Trotwood's visit to Mrs. Copperfield on the night of David's birth, while a storm rages outside—is characteristic. While the film, like the novel, is shapeless, picaresque in development, this acceptance of Dickens' own method allows it to establish, to put on the screen, what really counts: his wonderful characters and their superbly dramatic dialogue. In the case of Edna May Oliver's magnificent Aunt Betsey, Lennox Pawle's Mr. Dick and Jessie Ralph's Peggotty, one has the genuine sensation of seeing the people "come to life." Even the fact that Freddie Bartholomew brings more precocious skill than charm to David does not really flaw the film's progress, and the miscasting of W. C. Fields as Micawber—he lacked the delivery for the part, remained defiantly vaudeville—was perhaps worthwhile, for the portrait at least conveys an equivalently overwhelming eccentricity.

There is some lessening of the impact in the second half, but here the film (like *Great Expectations*) faces the problem that the novel itself becomes constricted by plot complications. Roland Young's Uriah Heep is insufficiently repellant (and his fate is mitigated), the "child-wife" Dora is not Victorian enough in manner, and "something interesting" was not, after all, made of Agnes, rather stodgy in Madge Evans' performance. Yet Frank Lawton, as the grown-up David, creates almost the ideal Dickens hero, with his hesitant boyish charm, perfect manners, and conventional good looks touched with fragility.

The London settings, for which Mrs. Natalie Bucknall's research operations were given much publicity—"700 antiques had been purchased outright, 73,000 photographs



"Emotionally compelling . . ." Robert Montgomery, Helen Hayes, Otto Kruger in "*Vanessa*".

classified and filed and several hundreds of old books collected," etc.—are, in fact, not only scholarly but alive; and Cukor's direction, discreetly subservient, is a model of unselfish skill. The result may not be a film "in its own right"—if it is denied the performances make it that—but it undoubtedly shows that confidence and affectionate relish of the material are the most important qualities for bringing Dickens to the screen.

IV

When Walpole finally left Hollywood in 1935, after a few weeks more on the script of *Kim* and the offer, which he refused, to revise somebody else's adaptation of *Captains Courageous*, his total earnings from M.G.M. and Selznick International must have amounted to well over £10,000, not including his share in the rights of *Vanessa*; his completed work had consisted of the *David Copperfield* screenplay, his adaptation (with Coffee) of his own *Vanessa*, and his solo version of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. He seems to have returned to England delightfully unembittered, for all the momentary exacerbations; he had spent most of the money on books and pictures, made new friends, enjoyed the climate, and acquired a genial attitude towards the new medium, which a few subsequent observations record. In London he saw *Copperfield* and *Vanessa*, and on the whole liked them very much; both gave him a feeling of "funny, rather moving intimacy," though he couldn't see why Judith Paris, in the film of *Vanessa*, was made to live to the age of 130. A year later he agreed to adapt *Jamaica Inn* for Erich Pommer and Laughton, and did two scripts, for which he was paid £2,000, but neither proved acceptable. His heart, he confessed in the journal, wasn't really in them. He accepted an offer, however, to work on the adaptation of Vaughan Wilkins' *And So—Victoria* for Victor Savile, a project that finally lapsed after the script was completed.

In 1938, also, he contributed a Preface to Stephen Watts' symposium, *Behind the Screen*, to which various technicians (Cukor, Lee Garmes, Cedric Gibbons, Douglas Shearer), a costume designer (Adrian), a writer (Frances Marion) and actors (Leslie Howard, Lionel Barrymore) contributed descriptions of and reflections on their work

in films. In the Preface, Walpole paid tribute to the "mysterious, tantalising possibilities" of the new art, praised Clair, Disney and Chaplin, described *Rembrandt* as one of the most beautiful films he had ever seen, but was pessimistic about the writer's future in the cinema. The director, he felt, was the dictator-artist, who had to dominate a collaboration between various talents. At this unexceptionable point, however, Walpole, attempting to penetrate more deeply, achieved an extraordinary sentence which suggests only how remote, in spite of everything, his understanding of the seventh art must have been. The bewildering dictum runs:

"No director, Capra, Cukor, or Lang, could make a successful film of Flaherty's wonderful photography if a commonplace, badly written script were thrust into the middle of it."

Perhaps, though, one does not regret the confusion; if Walpole had understood and cared more about the cinema, he would have been seriously frustrated in working for it. (And one may be thankful he did not live to see the 1948 version of his *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill*.) As it turned out, the two levels of the best-seller, Hollywood's and his own, met and successfully combined. He achieved something acceptable to both parties, and no hard feelings remained on either side. He returned finally to England unimpaired, the stuff of half a dozen novels, two plays, some autobiography and a score of stories still inside him for his last five years; and as for material goods, Hart-Davis records that he came back with, "Three Cézannes, three Renoirs, two Picassos, a Gauguin, a Braque, and a Derain, besides a large number of drawings and lithographs by Beardsley, Toulouse-Lautrec and other artists." One or two of these are now in the Tate Gallery, to which Walpole made a generous bequest in his will.

It is indeed a relief to discover that Hollywood and a writer of such celebrity—and, whatever his qualities, Walpole took himself very seriously as a novelist—could collaborate without a disagreeable moral being attached to the results. (The moral that a great deal of money is wasted in film-making is a constant one, and need not specially apply here.) Not that other distinguished writers, however, should take heart from this. Walpole wrote shortly before leaving Hollywood:

"This place is making me lazier and lazier. It isn't a good sort of laziness in which you recuperate, but a bad sort in which your character becomes weaker and weaker and you care less and less whether you do anything properly or not. I've just been telling John Collier that he'll be completely and utterly damned, body and soul, if he stays here much longer, but he tells me that he wants to be damned and is longing to know what it's like."

Readers of Mr. Collier's brilliant short stories will not need to be told that they express most vividly the feelings and vicissitudes of damnation, and betray some acquaintance with the personage of Beelzebub himself. Mr. Collier is still domiciled in Hollywood, and his film work there since the time of Walpole has included *Her Cardboard Lover*, *Deception*, and two out of *The Story of Three Loves*.

All quotations from Hugh Walpole's letters and journals, unless otherwise credited, are taken from *Hugh Walpole: A Biography*, by Rupert Hart-Davis, published by Macmillan. Mr. Hart-Davis' book has served as the main factual source for this article, and I am most grateful to him and the publishers for permission to quote from it and to use it in this way.

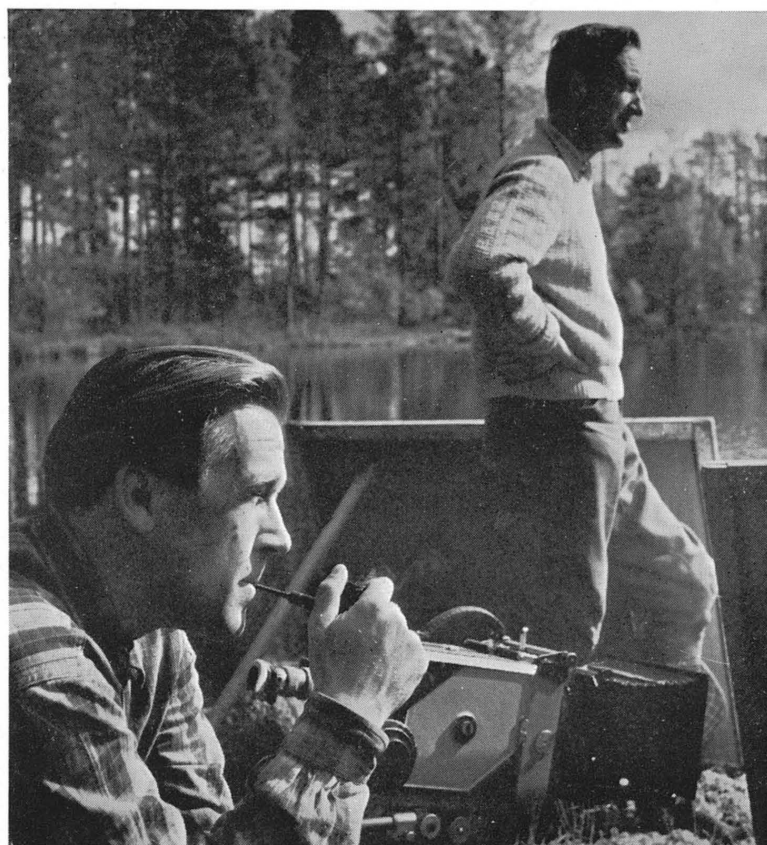
ARNE SUCKSDORFF'S ADVENTURE

Catherine de la Roche

Arne Sucksdorff, whose short films, "People in the City," "A Divided World," "The Gull," "The Wind and the River," and others, have gained him a high international reputation, has just completed his first feature film. Catherine de la Roche recently interviewed Sucksdorff in Sweden, and saw some sequences from the film.

A lynx cub started it all. In childhood Arne Sucksdorff wanted to draw. The lynx was a grand playmate but an elusive subject. Always he lost something of its dignity and rhythm, of the electric power in its movements. By a kind of process of natural selection he soon discovered that cinema was his medium. After reading biology in college, he went to study art in Berlin where he also worked with Rudolf Kleinroge in the theatre and in films. On holiday in Sicily he taught himself photography. And by the time he had finished a brief apprenticeship on documentaries, he had become, by choice and by temperament, a solo film-maker, writing, directing, photographing and editing short pictures that are as personal as poems. Now, in his first feature film, *The Great Adventure*, he also acts. And he has achieved a satisfactory portrait of a beautiful lynx. It was one of the sequences he showed me in Stockholm. On its way to drink at a stream, the lynx emerges calmly from the forest, vaults over an enormous gap in the rocks and proceeds on its winding way, as if performing a single fluid movement. "Twenty thousand volts of electricity!" murmured Sucksdorff.

So consistent is Arne Sucksdorff's development as an artist that *The Great Adventure* seems to be at once a fulfilment of early ambitions, a synthesis of previous work and a point of departure. The adventure of the title is life, the conflict between the forces of good and evil in all living things. In this it is an elaboration of *A Divided World*, which he now regards as a preliminary sketch, though "not a good film." The philosophy in *The Great Adventure* is the same as in most of his pictures, including, significantly, *Indian Village* and *The Wind and the River*. Before going to Kashmir to make these, he had been much impressed by a book in which the anthropologist Verrier Elwin describes how a missionary in a Gond village came to be converted by the inhabitants. On arrival, Sucksdorff found a small community which, though living in the same conditions as the Hindus nearby, had different beliefs. "In effect," he explains, "the Hindus say no to life and life rejects them. The Gonds have a positive faith and life says yes to them. The maxim that human beings are what they eat is, of course, nonsense: we are what we believe. In *The Great Adventure* I try to show an acceptance of life and . . . of other human beings. After all, one of the main human rights is the right to make mistakes!"



Sucksdorff and his assistant, Nils Gustaf Orn, during the making of "The Great Adventure".

In Sucksdorff's films acceptance is never fatalism. It is an act of courage, a refusal to ignore life's cruelties or to reconcile them with the beauty in nature. Neither are his pictures passively contemplative. He aims to reveal the implications in the things he has perceived. For this reason, those who deny that *The Gull* and *A Divided World* have philosophical, and hence political, meaning are as mistaken as those who interpret them as allegories of modern times. Sucksdorff is a seeker after truth. He seeks it in the whole of creation, in wild life and in human society, and when he discovers parallels between the two, he shows them with a poetic simplicity infinitely more telling than any literary allegory, because the parallels are real, not contrived.

Last June, when *The Great Adventure* was complete except for the final stages of dubbing, he went for the first time in months to see a movie—*Jeux Interdits*. "It is a wonderful picture," he says. "To my consternation, I found that the idea is the same as in my film. There's the dark, shocking background—war in the French picture, the common, everyday cruelties of life itself in mine. There are children turning life into a fairy tale which they take in earnest, protecting a secret from the terrors of reality—in my film they live on a farm, surrounded by a forest, which is a world without compassion, and their secret is a small otter cub whom they try to save from danger. I have tried to show nature as a whole, as a world of good and evil in which human beings eventually have to make a choice. My film, therefore, is probably more primitive, more sensual."

Work on *The Great Adventure* began three springs ago and continued night and day till midsummer this year.



Three studies of foxes. Top left: the fox in early spring, in search of a mate. Right: the fox in winter, his sense of smell neutralised by the snow, hears a mouse moving beneath the snow, as the "radar" of his ears suggests. Below: cubs fighting over prey.





Attacking woodcock: retreating intruder (Sucksdorff).

Arne Sucksdorff's
The Great Adventure

Most of the time Sucksdorff with two or three assistants, his childhood's friends, lived in huts deep in the forest six miles south of Stockholm, not far from his home. It was the same location as for *A Summer Tale*. For recording sound they had a magnetophone, which he considers a much bigger revolution than 3-D. "Sound is film," he declares. "3-D splits the medium. A record of the rhythm and noises of natural life enables you to portray reality so much more closely than by means of reconstruction, that there's no comparison between the two." Aiming, as ever, to catch the telling moments in both human and animal life, he works from a story outline, but without a shooting script. "Life is so irrational, so unpredictable," he says, "that you must be free to adjust your story while the film is in the making, to watch and hear and feel everything in the atmosphere. I don't want to rape reality."

Arne Sucksdorff's love and understanding of animals is an integral part of his art. He respects them as they are, never attributing human characteristics to them. And though he hunts, as they do themselves, he would not betray their trust, which is the reason why he can so often win it. Many of his films are based on friendships with wild animals. Seven years ago, when making *A Divided World*, he caught a fierce female fox and began taming her by keeping her in his room. For ten days she resisted all overtures. Then, while he was quietly working on the script, she suddenly decided "to change the relationship", and became friendly. Some of her cubs appear in *The Great Adventure*. In a sequence showing the mysterious enchantment a full moon has for animals, who often become "moon-demoniac", there is a scene that could never have been scripted. A fox, noticing that the dog is chained, comes to investigate a rope of laundry, rocking in the breeze. And soon, completely entranced, it dances with a pair of nylons, which shimmer in the moonbeams, tossing them high up with its muzzle.

Among the otters, who play so important a part in *The Great Adventure*, an orphaned cub holds a special place: her affection was "some kind of therapy," Sucksdorff believes, that restored him to health after a grave illness. "If I started worrying, she could always distract me. We bathed and fished together. And this enabled me to take pictures of her with her own kind that would otherwise have been quite unobtainable." If the woodcocks did not actually become friendly, he succeeded at least in making them ignore his presence by covering his observation hut completely with moss. Soon they got so used to the contraption that it did not disturb either their spring fights or mating, in the midst of which they would come to within an inch of the camera and glance straight into the lens.

The spring sequence is a symphony composed in sound and images, it is reality as vivid as a dream, a simple record of common manifestations, steeped in symbolical meaning. With irresistible force everything in nature breaks its way in different directions, seeking its own fulfilment, craving for freedom. The song of the nightingale and the wingbeats of cranes in flight give way to the whistling of otters, frisking happily in a lake, and to other voices of the forest. Inevitably, the call of spring also reaches the children's friend—the otter cub, which, held secretly captive for its own safety, makes desperate,

agonised attempts to escape. And, as inevitably, the approach of a new mating season re-awakens belligerent instincts in the animals. The noises of the forest become more urgent, more menacing.

Sucksdorff thus reveals the conflicting forces re-awakened in spring. He creates images of idyllic beauty, of purity and hope and radiance. Then he introduces the harsh tones of another reality, no more and no less powerful, but co-existent and therefore to be taken into account. And so his story develops. In one simple sequence he shows the love and hate in the struggle for survival. Risking death, a mother fox catches a chicken for her young. When she brings it to them, the downy, playful and immensely appealing little cubs are instantly transformed into vicious rivals, fighting each other like fiends for a morsel of the food.

Trying to intervene in this dangerous world, the children, two brothers, find difficulties everywhere. They must protect their cub not only from other animals, but also from their neighbour's gun. And somehow they must make the lonely prisoner happy. First they provide it with a tub to bathe in—a rapturous moment. But the tub is too small, really, so cautiously they take it on risky expeditions to a pool nearby. They do their best, but they make mistakes, and at the end (which I have not seen) they are filled with remorse. The key words of the film, Sucksdorff told me, are spoken by the youngest boy when he says: "Forgive me."

In handling human beings he has come a long way since *People in a City*. "In that picture," he says, "people were notes in an orchestration. Now I want human beings to be individuals and to play on me, as it were." He does not use actors. "Children who have ever acted are quite impossible," he insists, "especially in a film consisting chiefly of records of reality. I tried 700 boys for the part of the elder brother before finding the right one. Then it occurred to me that my son, who is six,

(Continued on page 112)



Photo by Astrid Bergman.



"Umberto D."

Film Reviews

UMBERTO D

Reviewed by Karel Reisz

Vittorio de Sica made his name in the Italian cinema in the 30's as a light romantic actor. He appeared in a series of comedies, mainly under Mario Camerini, for whose films he became what Albert Prejean had been for Clair's—a good-looking, likeable local boy who sang and danced a little and engagingly wooed a succession of pretty working-class heroines. That he was not satisfied with this popular success, he made clear as early as 1929 (when his reputation was still confined to the music-hall and light comedy stage): "I want to put aside once and for all the character of the good, slightly distracted sentimental boy. I want to attack something more profound."

The chance did not come for many years. De Sica directed his first film in 1940 and followed it with three more light comedies, all following the pattern of the Camerini films, with de Sica himself in the central part. One of these, *Teresa Venerdì*, which was recently shown at the National Film Theatre, is a quick domestic farce with the eligible young de Sica being pursued by three predatory girl-friends. Only some isolated touches of social satire (which proved unpopular with the fascist censorship) distinguish it from the earlier films. *I Bambini Ci Guardano* (*The Children Are Watching Us*) marked a considerable advance: the first film in which de Sica did not himself appear and the second in which Zavattini contributed to the script, it chronicles the effect on a four-year-old boy of his parents' quarrels. *I Bambini* has

the first and perhaps most successful of the series of child performances that de Sica has created and contains some sharp passages of social observation; but it is episodic and over-contrived—faults which have never recurred in de Sica's films.

The real opportunity "to attack something more profound" came just after the war when de Sica and Zavattini made *Sciuscià*. "What struck Zavattini and me at the end of the war, was the human solitude," de Sica has said in retrospect, and the comment goes some way towards explaining the remarkable change of style and intensity which came into his work. It is revealing in two ways. First, because de Sica insists on bracketing his name with Zavattini's when referring to the creative impetus behind the films. Second, because it implies not so much a new choice of subjects as a complete re-orientation of attitude. The change of subject matter was, admittedly, in itself radical: *Sciuscià* and the films which followed it are very far removed from what an Italian critic has called "the white telephone films" of the pre-war Italian cinema, but this is only an incidental virtue. The aim of *Sciuscià* and the rest was to report realistically on the contemporary scene, a fact which has frequently earned the films the label of being political. This, however, is only partly just. *Sciuscià*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Miracle in Milan* and *Umberto D.* are political films in the sense that they deal with problems which are subject to legislation and political control; but they offer no solutions and propagate no specific programme. Zavattini has spoken of the new style as "a moral discovery, an appeal to order" and the films themselves bear out that the impulse behind them is primarily a moral one. What remains remarkable about them as a group is that their moral passion, which was born of the war and could find

expression only after the release from fascism, has grown in intensity with every film.

On another page of this issue, Cesare Zavattini sets down a personal testament of cinema, an explanation of the approach the Italians have come to call neo-realism. As a general aesthetic the manifesto cannot I think be taken very seriously, for Zavattini's dismissal of conventionally dramatic films is little more than an inadequately rationalised prejudice: but as a guide to de Sica's and Zavattini's work it is highly revealing. Zavattini believes that the writer's function is to observe and record reality, not to invent situations and to offer solutions. It is an ambitious aim which, by Zavattini's own admission, commercial demands have never yet allowed him to fulfil. *Umberto D.*, recently seen abroad, and soon to be shown by British Lion in London, comes closest to the ideal. Its script, for the first time, is Zavattini's sole work, written without the customary Italian committee of writers.

Umberto Domenico Ferari (*Umberto D.* for short) is a lonely old man, cold, uncommunicative, clinging to his ingrained bourgeois standards of behaviour and dress in spite of his inability to pay the rent at a cheap lodging house. His only friends are a pet dog and the maid at the lodging house, who is pregnant by a soldier. The old man tries to sell his possessions to raise money for rent and finally, as a last resort, goes into hospital to save his food bill. On his return the landlady tells him that he must leave his room. With the prospect of having no home to go to, the old man contemplates suicide but, finding he cannot bear the thought of leaving behind his dog, attempts to throw himself in front of a train holding the dog in his arms: at the last moment, the dog jumps from him and cringes away in terror. With no possible solution to his problem, the old man tries to regain the dog's confidence and, in the delight of succeeding, runs joyously away into the distance, his dog restored to him, the problems of his physical existence unresolved.

The similarities to *Bicycle Thieves* are immediately striking. In the earlier film the practical questions—how to regain the bicycle, how to survive without work—are never answered. Yet the innocent child's instinctive reaction to the father's momentary fall from grace establishes, after a brief estrangement, a firmer bond between them: moral values at least are salvaged. Umberto's situation leads him similarly to contemplate suicide and, later, separation from his dog. The dog senses this and, through its instinct for survival, loses its trust in its master. It is this estrangement that makes Umberto come to terms with his situation. His last gesture does not suggest any practical solution—he still has no money, nowhere to go—but it represents a moral victory, an affirmation of solidarity.

Umberto D. cannot be regarded as a work of that ultimate austerity which Zavattini demands from a neo-realist film. Its story is loosely dramatised and its progression of events mounts to an interior, if not to a practical, climax. Yet in its continual emphasis on dramatically irrelevant detail, the film comes close to Zavattini's ideal. A girl rises from her bed, stretches herself, yawns, looks through a window to

see some cats returning from their night out, goes into the kitchen, takes a mouthful of water from the tap . . . and so on. This is a sequence from the film and it is observed in minute detail: everything is recorded at its own tempo. The approach, it is important to note, is the opposite of the usual one of the documentary film: reality is not observed for the social facts it may reveal, but for its own sake—for, in Zavattini's phrase, "the love of reality", the joy and pain of observing human beings as they are.

Zavattini's neo-realist technique imposes on the director a severe discipline, most notably in the demand to use non-professional actors. The players are asked not to "act" but to "be": the player must become inseparable from the part. This makes the usual critical criteria about acting irrelevant and makes it difficult to speak with confidence about the performances. Yet, this admitted, there remains the fact that some non-professionals "behave" in front of the camera more effectively than others. The boy in *Bicycle Thieves* engaged one's sympathy and interest immediately—he would have done so, one suspects, had one met him in the street. Neither of the chief players in *Umberto D.* quite has this natural aptitude and it is the greatest tribute to de Sica's skill that their performances never appear in the least artificial. De Sica's extraordinary tact with people enables him to get performances that are always real and dignified. Whether they are more than this must depend on the players chosen and in *Umberto D.* they sometimes fall short. In the scenes demanding strong emotional reactions, de Sica's unadorned method of observation occasionally leaves the players, as it were, too much on their own in the centre of the screen.

The best scenes in *Umberto D.*—the maid rising in the morning, the sequences at the soup kitchen and the hospital, the whole last reel—have a purity of effect which gives them, in context, a profound poetic intensity. Although the episodes mount, in a dramatic sense, slowly, there is behind them a kind of passionate identification with the characters' human predicament which creates an extraordinary concentration. De Sica has brought his subject to the screen with a directness which springs from an inner conviction and faith in his characters. It gives the film, in spite of faults in execution, the unmistakable authority and completeness of a masterpiece.

Apart from its remarkable human qualities, *Umberto D.* is an experimental film of the first importance in that it extends a relatively new approach to film-making to a daring extreme. A number of recent films by established directors—Visconti's *La Terra Trema*, Renoir's *The River*, Ford's *Wagonmaster*—all employ, in their different ways and with their different aims, a discursive approach to character not primarily dependent on dramatic narrative: they make their points through obliquely relevant passages of observation rather than through an organised dramatic pattern. *Umberto D.* takes the process a stage farther: it proceeds in a long chain of side-observations, each used for its own inherent interest. In de Sica's hands, the method carries the cinema's most direct response to human behaviour.

THE SUN SHINES BRIGHT

Reviewed by Lindsay Anderson

In a moment of discouragement, no doubt, John Ford remarked two years ago that *The Quiet Man* would quite likely be his last picture. Happily, though, his spirits seem to have revived. Of the three films he has made since then, *The Sun Shines Bright* is the second, and the most entirely his own. "I didn't make it for the critics" he said of it, "or for the public. I made it for myself." And personal feeling, personal statement—those qualities which seem each year to grow rarer in the American cinema—are implicit in every foot of it.

Budgeted modestly and shot fast, the film has its rough edges. Visually, it is somewhat lack-lustre: Archie Stout (the cameraman also on *Fort Apache* and half *Rio Grande*) is not one of Ford's more distinguished collaborators, and though the images have all the forcefulness, lucidity and power of suggestion that one would expect, their lighting is rather

"I Bambini ci Guardano".



A scene from "The Sun Shines Bright", with Dorothy Jordan.



harsh. There are signs too of Ford's impatience nowadays with the exigencies of exposition. Frank Nugent, who has written most of his recent films, has reported that he and Lawrence Stallings had to fight violently to get Ford to shoot what they felt was a key scene, from the story point of view, in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*—and even then he cut it out of the picture. *The Sun Shines Bright*, which is based on three short stories, must have set Stallings quite a few problems of this sort, and one suspects that in his efforts to weld this material into a continuous narrative he became involved in a number of similar arguments with his impatient director. It is obvious who won. The first half of the film is not without its puzzling moments; and I am still not sure what relation the girl was to the old General.

But you might as well criticise Niagara. Ford made *The Sun Shines Bright* to please himself, and as a result it has all the mellowness and familiarity of one of his really personal films. The world of these Judge Priest stories is one to which he has turned back with delight, affectionately nostalgic for their Deep South setting, relishing their ripeness of characterisation, brilliantly juggling their unabashed sentiment against their wry and earthy humour. The Judge himself, that affable compound of courage, humanity and the wariest opportunism, first figured in a Ford picture in 1934, when Ford directed Will Rogers in *Judge Priest*. Two years later he said to an interviewer: "I remember a few years ago, with a Judge Priest picture, putting in an anti-lynching plea that was one of the most scorching things you ever heard. They happened to cut it, purely for reasons of space . . ." Clearly that plea, which had to be abandoned on the cutting-room floor, remained in Ford's mind; for here it is in *The Sun Shines Bright*, reinstated and still glowing, and preceded with a masterly little sequence of panic among the Negroes, shot with the same impressionist brilliance and shock-power as the flashback to the boxing-match in *The Quiet Man*. Ford believes rather in the relaxed approach now; but when he wants to stun, he certainly has not forgotten how.

With its homespun comedy of small-town snobberies and politics, its sentimental-humorous reminiscences of service in the lost cause of the South, its old-time songs and feudal atmosphere, *The Sun Shines Bright* is a film that Ford has

enjoyed making all the way through. But one episode has challenged and intrigued him above the rest—the climactic one of the prostitute's funeral. This is a magnificent tour-de-force, with its emotional conviction supported by a sharpness of definition that shows the hand of a story-teller of genius: the ornately-caparisoned hearse followed by the single figure of the Judge; the lonely barouche full of prostitutes, half proud, half scared at their own temerity; the raw crunch of wheels on gravel; the shocked and silent bystanders; and, in ones and twos, the generous-hearted ones who have courage above convention, and who step deliberately out into the road to join Judge Priest behind the hearse.

It is impossible not to wonder at the way Ford has managed to preserve so freshly, all these years, this power to move and to delight, this *poésie du coeur*. The phrase is Cocteau's; it evokes precisely the kind of positive poetry, full of faith and love of life, which Ford continues to create, alone. How glad we should be that he decided not to make *The Quiet Man* his last picture.

JULIUS CAESAR

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

It would be interesting if this film could appear in London at the same time as Orson Welles' *Othello*, for they represent basically opposed approaches to Shakespeare on the screen. Welles, as we knew earlier from his *Macbeth*, is the great advocate of "cinema", and his two Shakespeare films suggest, almost, a pitched battle between two arts—the greatest mound of dead being formed by Shakespeare's lines, mowed down and piled up one by one in the cause of the director's own images. In *Othello* this style exists at its most brilliant, and the rich surface of the film hypnotises, its rhythm is original and daring. Yet there seems to me no doubt that the new *Julius Caesar* (produced by John Houseman, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, for M.G.M.) is not only better Shakespeare but, paradoxically, the more complete film in its own right. If you had never seen or read "Othello" before going to Welles' film, you wouldn't know what it was about; in human terms, in terms of character, of shifting and developing relationships, of the style of dialogue and construction, it

would seem fascinating, but confused and partially incomprehensible. For all its "cinema", this scarcely makes *Othello* a film in its own right.

Julius Caesar, faithful to the text—not only the words but the construction—could make a self-contained impact at first viewing, both as a revelation of the play's intrinsic quality and as a highly distinguished interpretation and staging of it. The film's starting-point is a confidence in the material as Shakespeare conceived it, its aesthetic problem how to place it most directly and dramatically on the screen, with actors to speak the lines well and with a camera style to create a rhythm suitable to the cinema without destroying the rhythm of the text. This is an unfashionable approach, but the Houseman-Mankiewicz production has an austerity, a dynamic inner force, an absence of externals, that are finally more effective than any amount of *chiaroscuro*.

The opening scene, with Marullus and Flavius talking "sedition" in the market place, stripping garlands from Caesar's statue, and being quietly taken in charge by Roman guards as they start to move away, swiftly and pointedly sets the style. *Julius Caesar* is to be represented, in Houseman's own phrase, as a "political thriller", the contemporary implications of which the treatment stresses but does not force; the story of a tyrant grown too ambitious, a police state in the making, conspirators who plot to overthrow the dictator, an assassination, the wars and internecine struggles for power that follow. As in the play, the emphasis remains on the personal conflicts; and the discreetly planed text (only notable omission: Cinna the Poet's scene) seems to concentrate the drama even more closely on the three Romans involved, Brutus, Cassius and Mark Antony, their different motives, convictions and ultimate fortunes.

The action is set against a plain and vividly contrasted reconstruction of Rome, designed by Cedric Gibbons and Edward Carfagno, with the emphasis on simple architectural lines. (The simplicity slackens into artlessness only in the night scenes, after the battle, which look too theatrical.) The scenes inside the Capitol, in Caesar's house, on Brutus' terrace overlooking his orchard, are expressively bare and spacious—undecorated walls and pillars and, instead of the meaningless number of extras one might expect, a profusion of statuary, often used with telling effect. Backdrops give us villas sloping up the hills, and cypress trees. In the market place there is a glimpse of wretched slums, and many people in the crowd look poorly dressed. The climactic battle scene, again, makes no concession to extraneous spectacle: the ambush of Brutus' and Cassius' armies is simply and tensely established, and as the fighting starts, the issue is indicated not by the clash of steel but by a dissolve to Mark Antony astride his horse, a faint smile of triumph dawning on his face.

This kind of direct, dramatic economy is characteristic of the style; but, of course, it is on performances that final judgment rests. Of the four main parts, two are outstandingly well played, one becomes a brilliant *tour de force* and one a little disappointing. In the play itself, the action first gathers momentum through Cassius, and John Gielgud creates this envious and urgent schemer with a masterly, stinging attack; this is a great performance, vibrating with nervous energy, spoken with fervour and precision, and it dominates the film. In the smaller part of Caesar, Louis Calhern draws a subtle, original portrait of a tyrant past his prime: vain, selfish, at times foolishly vulnerable, and with sudden reminiscent streaks of meanness and cruelty.

On Marlon Brando's Mark Antony, opinions will no doubt differ; not an "orthodox" Shakespearean performance, it yet assimilates itself into the drama and the text by sheer emotional grasp and passion. It would, obviously, be absurd to expect, from a voice only recently trained to verse-speaking, a range and tone equal to Gielgud's; but though in this respect it has its limitations and rough edges, the performance is an electric one. Physically it has the glamour desirable but seldom found for the part, and this "shrewd contriver's" speech on the Senate steps after Caesar's murder is rendered with extraordinary power. In short, his playing can academically be faulted, and one can say that Brando isn't really a Shakespearean actor, but as a piece of dramatic interpretation it shows a rare, exciting talent.

He has the stature for the part; and this stature is, precisely, what James Mason lacks for Brutus. His is an intelligent and low-keyed performance, with some excellent moments in the first half, and conveys the scholar reluctantly transformed

into a man of action with real sensibility; but to "the noblest Roman of them all" the actor's temperament does not rise, most notably in the tent scene with Cassius. Here the clash of wills seems one-sided, and Brutus obstinate rather than driven by his own self-exacting integrity.

Of the others, mainly admirable, a sly Decius Brutus (John Hoyt), a robust Casca (Edmond O'Brien), a venerable Cicero (Alan Napier), and an embittered Marullus (George Macready) stand out; Deborah Kerr's Portia is nicely spoken but rather too wilting; and only Greer Garson's Calphurnia, alas, reminds one inescapably of the headmaster's wife having a go in the end of term play.

The pleasure that *Julius Caesar* gives as a whole is that of a skilful, gripping and well acted production on the stage, with the difference that its careful selection of players, though the results are uneven, attains a general standard rare in the theatre, and that this is a play which responds particularly well to camera treatment. The firmness and clarity of Mankiewicz's direction, its shrewd and detailed concentration on the players, its inventive manipulation of groups and crowds, its fine close-ups and its distinctive tempo, aided by the strong, sober black-and-white photography (Joseph Ruttenberg) give the drama a texture that is both apt and striking. As an example of continuous tension being brought to what is, in effect, a single scene, the whole uninterrupted sequence from Caesar's entry into the Senate House, his murder, the appearance and threatening soliloquy of Mark Antony, and the two great speeches to the restless crowd outside (a scene in which the various levels of sound are intricately balanced), is a remarkable and audacious achievement. It is, perhaps, the most eloquent proof that, in filming Shakespeare, fidelity to the text does not mean throwing up the sponge, but involves a test of virtuosity and strength with an equal claim to being considered "cinema".

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA

Reviewed by Philip Hope-Wallace

The inescapable moral of this well-meant and superior colour supplement affair (produced by Herbert Wilcox and Sir Laurence Olivier) is that for making a good film, there is no substitute for a thorough grounding in film grammar, no substitute for real cinematic talent. No one admires Peter Brook as a stage director more than I do; I have even swallowed his opera productions. He can set, light and animate a stage, fill it with sunshine or menace, as very few other English stage directors can, and we have been continually in his debt (e.g. *Venice Preserv'd* or *Dark of the Moon*). Evidence of a talent near to genius is fitfully revealed in the film, to be sure; an occasional long shot, a clash of colour to heighten a mood, a deployment of significant figures as in a ballet. But what is lacking is the syntax, the sheer, down to earth journalism of film-making. One is reminded of some lyrical poet who, faced with the simple task of writing a straight magazine article, cannot add one word to another in such a way that anyone will want to read the result.

Here Gay's ballad opera, with its good story and jolly trimmings, stumbles, halts, skips, dawdles—does everything but walk rhythmically. Filmgoers who pride themselves on being ordinary chaps affect not to notice any such things as the "rhythm" of a film; but what do they suppose it is if not a rhythm which makes films by, say, René Clair and Lubitsch, as exhilarating as listening to a Strauss waltz played by a Viennese orchestra? What is wanted here is the simple (but hard to win) quality which in the world of letters is called readability.

For the materials at which Mr. Brook tries his hand I have both admiration and affection. The splendid old piece itself; the Bliss arrangement, though over-thick in places; the settings, which were agreeable enough except when they seemed to be recalling that terrible eighteenth century of sedan chair Christmas cards and lavender toilet articles; and the players, with or without their own voices. Properly sustained by the camera, I believe Sir Laurence Olivier might have passed as a good Macheath, on the evidence of his Hotspur and his many "charming cad" roles, he ought to have been ideal. But between stage rakishness and screen rakishness there seems to be a gap which needs careful negotiation. In effect, this Macheath, though he can still use his eyes effectively, as at the end of "*How happy could I be with either*," is in the main a diffident, hang-dog fellow, far from gay, farther still from

"Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot". Jacques Tati in a scene from his new comedy (his first film since "Jour de Fête"), concerning a holiday in a small, peaceful seaside town.



Gay. His singing is hardly up to it. Generally dubbing bedevils the issue, but if any voices were to be dubbed, why not all? Mrs. Traips speaks as Athene Seyler (whose sly, toby jug face is, one supposes, an asset all British films like to cash) but she sings as Joan Cross, who might also have acted the role well. . . . Dorothy Tutin sings with someone else's voice. How strange it looks when one sees a girl rowing and hears her singing in the voice of someone who is *not* rowing. Is it only people who care a little for singing who feel uncomfortable at the spectacle of sounds being coupled with gestures, positions of the head and of the mouth which could never produce them? Or does the average spectator only feel obscurely that something absurd and incongruous is being perpetrated? In a stagey way the march to the gallows is memorable; but nothing has yet been done to confront the real problems of ballad opera on the screen. Yet, different things strike different people differently. After the Press show I was approached by an eminent music critic, who had paid his first visit to the cinema in twenty years. He was white and shuddering. "My dear fellow," he spluttered Henry Jamesianly, "I meanersay—do all these films have all this kissin' all the time? Ough!"

ROMAN HOLIDAY

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

The Cinderella success story in reverse—the poor little rich girl longing to play with the children in the street, the princess moping in the palace—has always been a favourite theme with sentimentalists. In William Wyler's modern fairy story, *Roman Holiday*, the nineteen-year-old princess runs away from the exhausting splendours of her duty-ruled life, democratically to see the sights of Rome with a hard-up, opportunist American reporter (a part to which Gregory Peck brings his gilt-edged charm, at once dependable and expertly casual). She, driven to screaming point by the schedules and public appearances of a European good-will tour, has slipped out of her country's embassy to discover Rome for herself; he, inevitably, sees in the encounter material for the biggest scoop of his career and, inevitably, lets it go. After ices on the Spanish Steps, a ride on a Vespa, dancing by the Tiber, the idyll ends on a rueful, Ruritanian note of regret, with a dignified public farewell at a royal Press conference.

Pitched as a light romantic comedy rather than a Lubitsch-style social satire—it might have been a *Ninotchka* in reverse—*Roman Holiday* has an obviously workable situation, an agreeable, gently entertaining script by Ian McLellan Hunter and John Dighton, and the inestimable advantage of its Roman locations, stylishly photographed by Franz Planer and Henri Alekan. What it demonstrably and unhappily lacks is

direction with a real sense of humour. William Wyler, Hollywood's craftsman *par excellence*, has become the expert of the "big scene": the variously theatrical climates of *The Little Foxes*, *Carrie* or *Detective Story* best suit his highly assured, meticulous, but increasingly inflexible technique. Applied to what is, after all, primarily a naturalistic location comedy, and an anecdote at that, this deliberate style has a certain steamroller effect, flattening the material in its path. Wyler certainly gives the film a smooth, urbane surface. And he has handled with sympathetic skill a relatively inexperienced young actress, Audrey Hepburn, bringing out, one feels, everything in the way of charm and pathos that she has at the moment to give. This is an engaging performance, original and alive.

Wyler, though, has chosen to take the sentimental little story at an unduly funereal pace; in the early scenes, when Princess Ann is staggering about under the effects of a narcotic, one begins to feel that, like the *Sleeping Beauty*, she will not be allowed to wake up for a hundred years. And towards the end the farewell to the reporter drags on until the situation has gone dead, and Gregory Peck's features seem immutably frozen into a single expression of sympathetic melancholy. There is still a good deal to enjoy in *Roman Holiday*—the fountains and piazzas of Rome itself, observed in a spirit of Cook's Tour thoroughness, the pleasantly pitched performances, the generally civilised, gentle tone of the comedy. One regrets the more that a heavyweight director should have so tied down an essentially lightweight picture.

FRENCH FILMS AT EDINBURGH

Reviewed by J. A. Wilson

Edinburgh is a dusty, gusty, grim old city, full of enchantment; but there had been precious little enchantment in the first three tiring days of the Festival. Wednesday morning was brighter outside, with a west wind whipping at hair and skirts and the pennants on tram-cars. Inside a Princes Street cinema, decorated in depressed bad taste, there was a large, patient, early-rising audience, waiting and hoping for the best. And they were lucky, for they got something to take away with the memory of the violin-playing of Yehudi Menuhin and Isaac Stern, the bagpipes on the Castle Esplanade, the hairy-chested Hamlet of Richard Burton, the "fun in the bathroom" of Scotland's only water show down at the Gaiety, Leith—the theatre the critics forgot to visit.

Three French films were being shown that morning—*Le Grand Méliès* by Georges Franju, *Le Rideau Cramoisi*, by the film critic Alexandre Astruc, and *Crin Blanc* by Albert Lamorisse.

Le Grand Méliès went on first, and we wondered what we were in for. Franju, after all, was the man who, four years

ago, aimed at our hearts and hit our stomachs with *Le Sang des Bêtes*. But this was Franju in a different mood, casting a fond eye back to the beginnings of his craft and making a small, sincere salute to the man who, as much as anyone else, started it all.

Writing about *Le Grand Méliès* on the day of its showing, I said that it was not a biography, not even a fragment of biography, just a fond backward glance at a magician and his wonderful bag of tricks. Méliès was impersonated with grave charm and geniality by his son, and Franju took us back to 1929, when Méliès was found selling toys in a kiosk in the Gare Montparnasse. From there, he went back even further, recreating that famous meeting in 1895, when Méliès saw an exhibition of moving pictures given in Paris by the brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière. Long before the performance was over, Méliès rushed up to Auguste Lumière and offered to buy the invention. He offered him anything he wanted, but Lumière refused to listen. "Young man," he said, "you should be grateful, since although my invention is not for sale, it would undoubtedly ruin you. It can be exploited for a certain time as a scientific curiosity, but, apart from that, it has no commercial future whatsoever."

Yet, as Franju's film recalls, Méliès got what he wanted in London, built a studio and became, for a time, the most famous film-maker of them all. We were shown the best part of *A Trip to the Moon*, and then Franju introduced us to Madame Méliès, the old magician's widow. We followed her into a flower shop, through a subway, and watched her as she walked carefully but firmly down the street—an indomitable figure, older in years than the cinema itself.

Le Grand Méliès approached its subject obliquely yet, in the end, how much more moving a tribute it was than, say, *The Magic Box* which, with all its solemnity, failed completely to capture the living spirit of a man—any man, not just William Friese-Greene.

The second film in a fascinating programme was an adaptation of Jules Barbey D'Aureville's short story *Le Rideau Cramoisi*, and here I noticed the odd, unimportant coincidence that D'Aureville died in 1888, the year that Méliès became proprietor of the Theatre Robert-Houdin.

The story, you may remember, is of a young cavalry officer who finds himself billeted in a house occupied by a compla-

cent, middle-aged couple suffocating slowly in their own boredom. Life revolves lethargically around the supper table, and after about six months, living as quietly as his hosts, the officer comes downstairs one day to find a tall, impassive-looking young woman hanging her hat in the hall. This is the daughter of the house; she has just left boarding-school, and intends in future to live with her parents. A month passes, and one night the girl sits next to the officer at dinner. Without a glance at him, she puts her hand under the table and lays it firmly on top of his. Later, when she has to move it, she places her foot over his and keeps it there throughout the meal.

Soon the girl is a regular caller at the officer's room, and one night she collapses and dies there. After trying hopelessly to remove the body, the officer saddles his horse and rides away from the silent old house, the dead girl, and the red curtain which waves from the window of his room.

In the original, the story was told by the officer many years after it happened, and in the film only this voice is heard, describing, in retrospect, all that took place. That was the bold and at the same time the obvious way to treat the subject, but Astruc's triumph is the way in which he compresses the incidents of more than a year into a smooth-flowing narrative exactly suited to the best purposes of the screen. He does this by deliberately telescoping and distorting the normal perceptions we call reality: meal succeeds meal, and we observe, beneath the smooth, dark surface, the boredom, the curiosity, the warming passion, and the terror that make up the officer's experience through the months. Astruc makes use of big, meaningful close-ups, and lingers on the cold, outwardly unresponsive face of the girl, the details of the officer's uniform, the Empire furniture, the unseeing eyes of the father and mother.

Finally, to cap our pleasure, there was *Crin Blanc*, Albert Lamorisse's story of a wild horse and a fisher boy in the Camargue. Word had got around that this was a lovely piece of work, and already this year it had won the Prix Jean Vigo.

The story, briefly, is that Crin Blanc is leader of a herd of horses. The Gardiens of the Camargue have been watching him and trying to catch him for some time. After two unsuccessful attempts to hold him, they begin to smoke him out of some long grass. The fisher boy mounts the horse and leads him away, but the Gardiens follow, and when only the sea is in front, Crin Blanc swims into that until he and the boy disappear for ever.

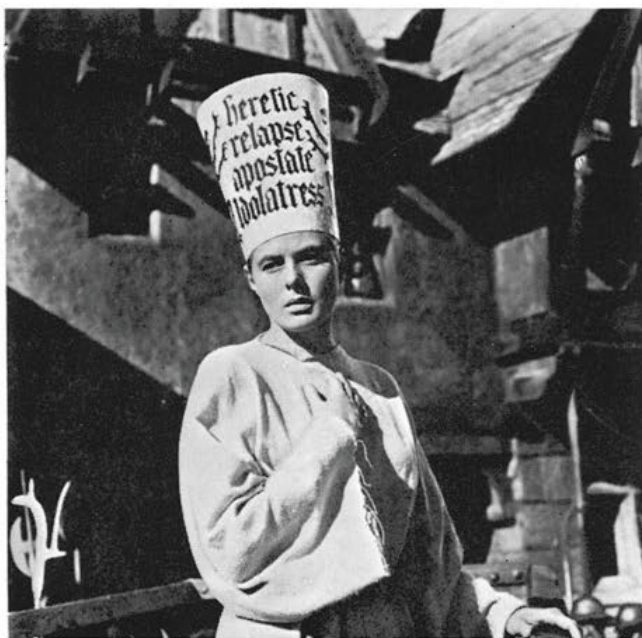
The images are as lovely as any that Georges Rouquier found in that other film of the Camargue, *Le Sel de la Terre*. Lamorisse is clearly a director to watch; he is thirty-one, and *Crin Blanc* is only his second film.

IN BRIEF

IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE (G.F.D.) puts a good idea fairly exhaustively through the "B" picture mill. The film, from a story by Ray Bradbury, imagines that a crew of Martians, or the like, voyaging through space, have to crash-land in the Arizona Desert. Wanting only time to repair their machine, they kidnap certain humans and take over their identities—assuming, rightly, that their own appearance, with a Cyclopean eye in the centre of an amorphous mass, would scare the wits out of anyone who saw them. The young astronomer hero (Richard Carlson, fresh from saving the world from *The Magnetic Monster*) alone perceives the superior qualities of the things from space, helps them to get safely into the air and scans the sky with a visionary "They'll be back". The idea that the visitors can, as it were, assume specific human identity at will (a characteristic Bradbury gambit) is intriguing, and some space travellers' eye views, through a sort of misty bubble, are quite imaginatively devised. But the comic strip style characters and dialogue, the hollow voice, staring eyes and somnambulistic walk used to denote possession by a creature from space, and the uninventive handling of situations make the picture as a whole only second-rate science fiction. The film is shot in 3-D of a fairly unaggressive variety (though the spectator at one point has to duck a small landslide of falling rocks), but it goes no farther than its predecessors in revealing any dramatic assets of the new technique.—Penelope Houston.

"Crin Blanc"





Two views of St. Joan. Right, Falconetti in "La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc;" Left, Ingrid Bergman in Walter Wanger's production of "Joan of Arc".

THE SAINT IN THE CINEMA

David Fisher

A Study of some recent films and revivals

"Oh! help me, heaven," she prayed, "to be decorative and to do right"—From "The Flower Beneath the Foot," by Ronald Firbank.

I was once moved to tears by a performance by Lionel Barrymore, I think it was: he played the part of a priest. Although the title of the film escapes me, I treasure the memory of him, seated in a boat during a hurricane, lifting heavenward that Neronian head of his, and sibyllically murmuring: "*It lies between myself and Someone greater than the police*". I wept; I was profoundly moved; I was ten years old.

That is my earliest memory of the Hollywood holy man, the convention of poker-faced or, alternatively, pipe-smoking priestliness—a convention with which every filmgoer has become all too familiar.

II

Inadequate as all such conventions must be, the religious convention, like that other Hollywood convention which governs the treatment of political subjects, has so far achieved only pretentious artificiality or saccharine sentimentality. Not because conventions are bad *qua* conventions—indeed, they are necessary to any art, if only for the reason that iconoclasts need idols to smash. But when they lose their validity, they degenerate.

The value of any convention lies in the fact that it provides a mode of feeling, a sort of Basic English of the emotions, which is not only significant when used to describe a certain experience but also is immediately accessible to every audience. The value lies less in the accessibility of the convention than in its significance: in other words, in its emotional conviction. Lacking conviction, the convention becomes moribund. Such conventions are like curare; they can paralyse the vocal muscles of a generation of film-makers.

Two recent films provide examples of the effect of this paralysis even upon directors and actors of ability and imagination. In *I Confess* (Director: Alfred Hitchcock), Montgomery Clift plays the part of a priest who chooses

to risk death or public indignity rather than reveal the secrets of the confessional. The film is adequate, but no more, and the performance of passive, poker-faced suffering remains emotionally muscle-bound: Role "A" Religious, in fact. In *The Little World of Don Camillo* (Director: Julien Duvivier) Fernandel, that *tragedien manqué*, performs Role "B" with the skill and panache expected of him. Don Camillo becomes gay and gusty, a "character". He lacks only an Irish brogue, pipe and Bing Crosby—he is Don Fitzgerald, franco-italianised. Hogtied from the start by a convention in which religion is wedded to the Sunday school story and—visually—to the Bible class print, both films remain a disappointing waste of talent.

III

Of all the religious films made since the war, the one which wears its conventional strait-jacket most satisfactorily, and also the most distinguished, is *Monsieur Vincent* (Director: Maurice Cloche), a work of intelligent and well-meaning mediocrity. Burdened with the Vatican's blessing, directors and writers bore the onus of producing a piece of cinematic hagiography. Their efforts met with success, and the resulting film suffers from all the defects of the genre.

Aided by the Comedie Francaise in the person of Pierre Fresnay and others, and by a script that can only be described as deliberately middle-brow, *Monsieur Vincent* performs the remarkable feat of transforming Vincent de Paul—saint, dialectician, diplomatist, economist, man-of-the-world—into a simple country priest. In achieving this astounding metamorphosis the scriptwriters (Anouilh and Luc) follow the conventional pattern. Sainthood becomes no more than a matter of piety, tenderness, dedication, heavenward-peering faith, and a woman hovering, loving but undemanding, in the background. In a



Hollywood Saint (left), Alan Badel "employing the staring eye" as John the Baptist in "Salome"; Hollywood Priest (right), Bing Crosby, with Ingrid Bergman, in "The Bells of St. Mary's".

word, religious experience is emasculated—any similarity between the saint and the simple-minded puppet of the film being purely coincidental.

Like so many saints, Vincent de Paul was devoured by a great love; he was possessed of a lust of compassion for the poor. In the place of violence, which is inherent in any great passion, the film gives us only good intentions and conventional theology; in the place of blood, something very like flat sodawater. This is not to say that, cinematically, the film is totally unrewarding. Certain sequences remain in the memory—notably Monsieur Vincent's entry into the plague-stricken village; his first real contact with the poor, as he sits in his smelly little room and listens with growing horror to the sounds of the brutality and despair which surround him; and in particular one remembers the long shots of interiors, carefully composed so that they look like something Velasquez might have painted. Nevertheless, in its desire not to offend authority, the film succeeds in being merely inoffensive.

The intellectually exciting though (except for those scenes on the seashore) visually banal film, *Dieu a Besoin des Hommes* (Director: Jean Delannoy) came much nearer to success. It was blessed with a fine performance by Fresnay in the role of Thomas the verger, and an adult script by Aurenche and Bost from a novel by Henri Queffelec. The film's unorthodox theology and mild anticlericalism was probably responsible for the singular lack of enthusiasm with which it was received; for, although in no way an outstanding film, it deserved serious critical attention, if only for its treatment of religion.

Dieu a Besoin des Hommes did manage to convey a rare sense of terror, the terror that Saint-Cyran speaks of—"Il n'y a pas d'idée plus terrible que celle de Dieu"—which is precisely the emotion that has been missing from all but a few religious films. One did feel something of the bewilderment and fear of an island community which banishes God in the form of the priest, only to become aware of a need which they satisfy by reinstating Him—almost unconsciously—in the person of the verger. Unfortunately the idea of the pseudo-priest,

his position in the community and his own spiritual problems, was not fully explored. The weakness of the film was not philosophic but aesthetic—its hopelessly "Cold Comfort Farm" treatment of the islanders. Its strength lay in an integrity which it achieved almost in spite of itself.

IV

Do the cinema's technical traditions, the present language and syntax of the film, lend themselves only to the treatment of certain themes? Is that why there are only two "classic" religious films—Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and Bresson's *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*—neither of them easily assimilable into those traditions. Certainly Dreyer and Bresson do not fit into any general theory of the film; Dreyer, in particular, appears to have been completely unaffected by many developments in film technique—the Russian theories of editing, for example. They were driven into isolation in order to express their intense personal visions, and by a refusal to compromise. This similarity of purpose, combined with the fundamental difference in vision and temperament, has resulted in a phenomenon rare in the history of the cinema: two films, two studies of sainthood and suffering, which precisely complement each other, as indeed their titles suggest. The older film reveals the poetic, public face of the Saint: the Passion; the other reveals the private face, the personal suffering: the Diary. Together they represent a coherent and moving study—the cinema's only successful study—of a vast area of human experience.

In the April issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND* Gavin Lambert, rightly, acclaimed the qualities of Bresson's film. He did not, however, precisely define the difference in stance between Bresson and his source, the novel by George Bernanos. Mr. Rayner Heppenstall in his book, *The Double Image*, has remarked Bernanos' pre-occupation with the ancient theme of the scapegoat: the innocent or would-be innocent, usually a child or a priest, who suffers and dies in order to atone for the sins of the society in which he lives. This theme transforms the novel into a geography of suffering, both physical and spiritual: a

passion in the Christian sense—but one made doubly poignant by doubt, the doubt that stamps all Bernanos' characters. They are prepared to suffer—doomed to suffer, one might say—but they are never quite convinced that their immolation serves any purpose. In his film Bresson believes implicitly in the validity of the young priest's faith and suffering; Bernanos in his novel, though convinced of the necessity of "*la sainte agonie*", seems haunted by the fear that it may prove meaningless. Because of this the film, a great and complete work of art in its own right, lacks the element of doubt that lends the novel the curious detachment which makes it the masterpiece it is. This deficiency does not diminish the film's stature, but one is aware of a slight but fundamental shift in emphasis—which serves to illustrate the quality of Bresson's contribution: his personal vision.

Comparison between Bresson and Dreyer is as popular as it is fruitless; they are really only comparable in the peculiar quality of their integrity and isolation, and also perhaps in one other instance: their need to dominate their actors. Bresson, for instance, drives Claude Laydu, whose face seems familiar from several films, to give an almost somnambulistic performance of spiritual and physical agony: one feels that he has ceased to act: he merely *is*. This domination tends naturally toward a certain formalism, and reveals an interesting similarity with the work of Kurosawa, the director of *Rashomon*.

Neither *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* nor *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* are easy films for the spectator; they demand concentration and an effort of imagination and sympathy. This is particularly true of the latter film, which for the spectator may be best compared to boxing or to bull-fighting; one either succumbs to their curious elegance and drama or one does not. Most works of art attempt to persuade; not so Dreyer's film. It hits below the aesthetic belt, its aim is to wind, not to woo.

The film has been described as a series of over-dramatic "shots", strung together like beads upon a familiar story and held together by camera movement. Which is a fair comment. But the film must remain unintelligible unless one realises that it is an attempt—for me completely successful—to create the cinema's only epic poem: that is to say, a work of art that is both epic and a poem. To this problem, obviously, the demands of the "realistic" film bear no relation. If Dreyer employs a film syntax as formalised and as personal as, in its own way, Milton's, this syntax is designed for a similar purpose. Certainly his method stresses the content of the individual shot; the images become of prime importance: they *are* the drama. (It is perhaps the measure of Eisenstein's failure in *Ivan the Terrible* that he did not succeed, like Dreyer, in transmogrifying image into action.) Dreyer achieves textual coherence by means of subtle camera movement, sensitive—not merely clever—use of camera angles, as well as by relying upon the familiarity of the story.

In a film where the composition of each shot is all-important, it would be a miracle if his touch did not falter, and occasionally it does. In the composition of the long shots, for instance, he trembles on the brink of the Bible class print—only to be saved by those fantastic close-ups of a mouth, a tonsure, a face composed seemingly of toad-skin, or by the movement of the camera as it follows a whisper along a row of sly, venial faces. These close-ups drive the spectator into a state of anguished hypnosis, until he suffers with Joan; he does not witness; he participates.

Dreyer's passionate sincerity binds the film together and preserves its occasionally precarious equilibrium. This sincerity is reflected in the playing of Marie Falconetti as

Joan—a performance which has been described as the greatest in the history of the cinema. I, for one, would not challenge its pre-eminence. A terrible sincerity, an obsession with the individual who suffers, are Dreyer's contribution to the cinema.

V

At the age of ten I was moved by a piece of Hollywood hokum—by a bad convention in action—a convention that stretches from Griffith's tawdry, pietistic treatment of Christ in *Intolerance* to the latest, wide screen, New Testament Whipsnade, *Salome* (Director: William Dieterle). By now one would have adjudged it to be exhausted; and indeed this does seem to be the case: ossification has set in. For, unless the romance of retrospect has enhanced Barrymore's performance, the latter seems to me now to compare very favourably with, say, Alan Badel's in the role of John the Baptist in *Salome*. That intelligent actor returns to the ophthalmic, or rather, myopic, school of acting, employing the staring eye like a male Lillian Gish. His performance is in keeping with the rest of the film which, by its too obvious awareness of the box-office value of sex and religion, succeeds only in being professionally knowing, like a sports writer at a championship fight.

This hardening of the arteries is discernible in most of the familiar Hollywood formulæ, and suggests that we are now in for a period of sex and saintliness, etc., of films whose box-office appeal is calculated by slide-rule and Gallup poll—a period of decadence. That means bad hokum. Good hokum demands a certain innocence and a certain degree of sincerity on the part of the filmmaker, which is why it can be both moving and enjoyable. The test will be, perhaps, whether today's ten-year-olds will be as moved by Badel as I was by Barrymore. Personally I doubt it, not because children are more sophisticated, although I am sure they are, but because the shoddy, confected hokum of *Salome* may prove too much for even that emotionally omnivorous animal—a child.



"A simple country priest"; Pierre Fresnay in "*Monsieur Vincent*".

IRELAND'S FIRST FILMS

Proinsias O Conluain

Strange as it may seem, Ireland was nearer to having a film industry of her own forty years ago, when the cinema was in its infancy, and Hollywood still unheard of, than she is today when nearly every country with any pretensions to progress or any appreciation of the power and influence of the screen makes indigenous films of some sort. It has to be admitted at the outset, however, that even the 40-year-old Irish-made films owed no more to local effort and talent than did, say, *The Quiet Man* or *Captain Boycott* or *No Resting Place*. They were the work of an American company which came to County Kerry for about four months every summer during the years from 1910 to 1914, and their importance in the history of the cinema is not because they were the first feature films made in Ireland—but because they were produced by one of the outstanding directors of that period and marked the beginning of a new phase in film technique and development.

In the years before 1910, nearly all film-making was still conceived very much in terms of the stage: little attention was paid to authenticity of setting or to background detail; a painted backcloth was liable to be used without compunction or apology, or at best, a stretch of very obviously American landscape would do duty for any country in the world.

Sidney Olcott, one of the most talented of the Kalem Company's directors, did much to remedy that state of affairs. He brought his camera and his actors to the location required by the script and made the most effective use of natural settings and backgrounds. One of his most successful films was the highly controversial *From the Manger to the Cross*, which he made for Kalem in Egypt and the Holy Land in 1912, and to which many people objected because the lady who played the part of the Blessed Virgin had been divorced. That apart, the film treated its religious subject matter with delicacy and reverence, and by making a neat profit of a million dollars confounded the prophets in the industry who said, as such people will, that a picture of that type could not be a success at the box-office. It is a tribute to the film's enduring qualities that 16 mm. copies are still being shown.



"Rory O'More": Rory (Jack Clarke) escapes a hanging.

On his way home from Palestine in 1912, Olcott shot a number of films in the south of Ireland, but it was two years earlier that he had made his first film in Killarney—a film entitled *The Lad from Old Ireland* which has the distinction, never until now credited to it in print, of being the very first feature film produced by an American company outside America. It has probably little other claim to fame.

Olcott's Irish ancestry undoubtedly had much to do with the selection of Ireland for this pioneer venture. His mother was born in Dublin but had emigrated to Canada, and it was there that he himself had been born. Crossing to the United States as a young man, he made his first stage appearance as an Irish cop, ("The 'brogue' got me the job," he said) in a production by Joe Santley's Company in New York. Later he went into films with the Kalem Company, graduated from acting to directing and made a name for himself with the first *Ben Hur*, and some excellent films with a Florida background which were so effective in pictorial quality and atmosphere that his company decided to send him farther afield. Kalem was one of the largest and best known companies of its day. Olcott has himself told how one day he was called into the manager's office and a map of the world was spread before him. He was told he could take a full film-making unit to any place on the map he wished to select and he promptly pointed to the island where his mother had been born, and said: "I would like to go there."

The Lad from Old Ireland was such a success when shown in the United States that Kalem were encouraged to send a larger unit to Ireland the following year. This

unit consisted of Olcott as director, Robert G. Vignola as assistant director, Gene Gauntier, the controversial Virgin of the *Manger to Cross* film, as leading lady, George Hollister as cameraman, Alan Farnham as designer, and a number of other actors and actresses, some of whom were to be well known later on. They made their headquarters at Beaufort, a cross-roads' guest house, pub, shop and little else, on the way from Killarney to the Gap of Dunloe in Co. Kerry—a quiet, secluded spot providing plenty of horses and horsemen for the films and convenient to the richly varied lake, mountain and valley scenery.

The first Kalem film made around Beaufort in 1911 was a one-reeler entitled *Gipsies in Ireland*. The second, also a one-reeler, dealt with the Irish patriot, *Rory O'More*, who was a prime mover in the rising in 1641. Single-reel or two-reel films were, of course, the rule at that time; under favourable conditions they could be turned out in a few days. A three-reeler was considered a long film and anything in excess of that length was probably regarded as an endurance test. In eighteen weeks Olcott produced seventeen films—almost one a week—the most ambitious of which was probably a three-reel version of *The Colleen Bawn*, by the Irish-American dramatist, Dion Boucicault. Shooting had hardly begun on this film, however, when an unexpected hitch occurred which brought work to a standstill for almost a week.

At Mass one Sunday, the local priest substituted for his usual sermon a verbal assault on the "tramp photographers" who had invaded the peace and quiet of Beaufort. These intruders, he said, were posturing as Irishmen, portraying the Irish as gipsies and ne'er-do-wells—worse, they were even donning the priestly garb and were making a mockery of all that Irish people held most sacred. He had himself seen two members of the film company with painted faces making love before the camera in a churchyard, thus desecrating the bones of his parishioners' ancestors, and he was perturbed to know that some local lads and lasses were, for a few paltry shillings, selling their souls to the devil by taking part in these vile activities. There was much more in a similar vein, culminating in an appeal to the sturdy men from the Gap of Dunloe to drive out this menace to faith and morals. Catholic members of the Kalem Company, who were present at the Mass and who had listened with an almost superhuman restraint to this tirade against them, remonstrated with the priest afterwards, attempting to explain their work to him—but without success. Olcott finally set out to see the Bishop of the diocese and the American Consul in Cork, and eventually obtained an apology from the priest, who was also transferred to another parish. He was now able to proceed with his work, with the full collaboration of all the people—a collaboration which extended from a loan of silver candlesticks or complete kitchen furnishings, to a willingness to swim rivers or jump from castle parapets. Every pioneering effort is likely to meet with some opposition and perhaps the priest who spoke so forthrightly, even if unjustly, should not be censured too severely; we must remember that Ireland was not the only country where films were at that time regarded as works of Satan, if they had been heard of at all, and that the heavy make-up of those days must have seemed a little frightening, if not even irreligious, to those unversed in its mysteries.

Sidney Olcott was a man who never shirked controversy; in fact, he seemed to thrive on it. His *Rory O'More* film and another of his early efforts, *Ireland the Oppressed*, got him into trouble with the British authorities of the time and, as a result of representations made to his company, he was threatened with recall to America if he did not choose less controversial subjects. It was thus, with an Irish priest objecting to his portrayal of his countrymen, the British taking exception to the screen treatment of their soldiery and his American masters concerned about their investment, that Olcott turned to the safer themes of Boucicault's romantic melodramas during the remainder of his stay in Ireland in 1911.

The Colleen Bawn, when completed, with Olcott himself as Danny Mann, one of the villains of the piece, was linked with *From the Manger to the Cross* as one of the most successful films of the period, and *Arrah-na-Pogue* had a special music score composed for it by Walter Cleveland Simon before it was shown in the United States. *The Shaughran* was another Boucicault play which was filmed at this time. In 1914, however, Olcott, who had broken with Kalem and was now in charge of his own production company, returned to a strongly patriotic Irish subject in *Robert Emmet, Ireland's Martyr*. Again the British military authorities objected—this time on the occasion of the film's showing in the Rotunda in Dublin in 1915. They demanded that it be withdrawn as it was interfering with their recruiting drive in Ireland. Ironically enough, the part of Emmet was played by an English actor, Jack Melville.

Many other incidents are recalled associating Olcott with stirring Irish events of the period. As part of the struggle for independence, the Irish Volunteers had been founded in 1913 and in the following year one of their first parades under arms, in public, was held in Killarney. It need hardly be said that rifles or other arms were not easily obtained by Irish Republicans at that time; yet the Volunteers of Killarney seemed to be a well-equipped force—they were armed with guns which the American film-makers had brought with them as "props" for their pictures! One of the Kalem actors, Pat O'Malley, who was, of course, of Irish descent, was in fact elected an honorary member of the Volunteers during his stay, and Olcott himself, both in his films and in his personal expressions of opinion, left no doubt as to where his sympathies lay.

Other films which Olcott directed during his four summers in County Kerry included *The Kerry Dancers*, *The Kerry Gow* ("Gabha" in Gaelic = "Blacksmith"), *Sean the Post*, with Olcott in the name part, *The Fishermid of Ballydavid*, *The Girl of Glenbeigh*, *A Puck Fair Romance*, and *Ireland 50 Years Ago*, all making excellent use of the beautiful local scenery and of the facets of Irish life suggested in some of the titles. The scenarios were written by Gene Gauntier, in collaboration with the director, and the two often worked well into the night to have their shooting scripts ready for the following day. Miss Gauntier, as well as being a talented actress with an apprenticeship of stage experience behind her, was one of the first script-writers the film industry had, and at a time when much film-making was done "off the cuff," her detailed preliminary treatment helped to give the Kalem films a smoothness of continuity and rhythm unusual at that time. Besides her term with Kalem, she



Two Kalem Company productions : left, "Colleen Bawn," with Robert G. Vignola, Jack Clarke and a Killarney setting ; right, "Gipsies in Ireland." This group includes Alice Hollister, Gene Gauntier, and the director, Sidney Olcott.

worked as a scenario editor and as a leading player with Biograph, and she also established her own producing company, directing a number of films which featured her husband, Jack Clarke, who had taken the part of Myles na gCopaleen in *The Colleen Bawn* and the name part in *Rory O'More*. In 1915 she joined Universal City in California, and one of her first films there was entitled *The Ulster Lass*—an obvious studio attempt at cashing in on the success of her earlier pictures with Olcott.

Olcott was lucky in having a number of other talented players in his company during his Irish visits. They included two others who afterwards became producers and directors. Robert G. Vignola, who had played Judas in *From the Manger to the Cross* and the Squire in *The Colleen Bawn*, directed many films in the 'twenties and earlier, and is now living in retirement in Hollywood. Jack MacGowan, an Australian and a fine horseman, was well known in the silent period for his "Westerns" and for his "Hazards" series and he may also be remembered as the director of the talkie, *Little Nellie Kelly*. He was secretary of the Screen Directors' Guild in Hollywood from 1939 to 1950, and he died only last year.

Another member of the Kalem Company who played in Ireland and who has some claim to a place in film history is Alice Hollister. To her goes the doubtful honour of being the first "Vamp" in what was to prove a long series of such pictures. Her husband, George Hollister, was the cameraman of the Kerry-made films and not only did he do the actual camera work but he also developed the films as well, in a specially constructed dark room on the spot.

A versatile, hard-working and intelligent cast, the integrity of the director, his flair for authenticity and his attention to detail, the innovation in using genuine backgrounds and the appeal to Irish exiles in the United States ensured the success of the first feature films made in Ireland. They are mentioned prominently in Lewis Jacobs' fine critical history, *The Rise of the American Film*. Jacobs describes Olcott as "a serious and sincere contri-

butor to motion picture art, a director of individuality and merit during two formative periods of the American film," and of the Irish-produced films he says:

"The traditional (Irish) trade-marks of shiftlessness, clay-pipe smoking and the kettle of beer were likewise discarded. *You'll Remember Ellen*, *Kerry Gow* and *The Colleen Bawn* metamorphosed the 'Begorrah and b'gosh' comedian into an authentic social being moved by real emotions. Irish pride of heritage and the injustices of Ireland's past were explained in such films as *The Mayor of Ireland*, *The O'Neil*, *Rory O'More* and *Ireland the Oppressed*."

When the Elstree studios were opened in England, Sidney Olcott was invited to direct a series of film adaptations of Edgar Wallace thrillers at a salary of £400 a week. On reading the script of one of these—*The Ringer*—Olcott refused to accept responsibility for it as director, saying that crime predominated in it and that the subject as a whole was objectionable. In a lawsuit which followed, Olcott's attitude was upheld and he was awarded almost £4,000 damages for deprivation of salary over the period in dispute. In 1923 Olcott was nominated as one of the best directors of the year and at different times he directed such stars as George Arliss, Pola Negri, Gloria Swanson and Valentino in some of their most successful films. He died in December, 1949, and it is a significant footnote to the man's character that, as news of his death was announced, a Christmas present arrived in Beaufort, Co. Kerry, for one of the friends he had made there 40 years earlier.

How far an Irishman, viewing Olcott's films today, would be prepared to agree with Jacobs we do not know—some of the stills we have seen are as stage-Irish as one could imagine—but it does seem clear that Olcott made a sincere effort to portray Ireland and the Irish as he found them, and to deal sympathetically with their history. Those who have seen the pictures tell us that they were very far removed from that prize-bedecked but benighted film, *The Quiet Man*. But whether or no, one thing is certain—Ireland has never since seen so continuous or so concerted an effort at film production.

REPLIES TO A QUESTIONNAIRE

Film-makers: Sir Michael Balcon, T. E. B. Clarke, Henry Cornelius, Charles Crichton, John Grierson, Robert Hamer and Brian Desmond Hurst.

Critics: Paul Dehn, Catherine de la Roche, Forsyth Hardy, A. Jympson Harman, Ernest Lindgren, Freda Bruce Lockhart, Fred Majdalany, Roger Manvell, Robert Ottaway and Dilys Powell.

Traditionally the artist believes, or affects to believe, that the critic would be an artist if he could; traditionally, the critic defends himself. The film critic obviously has his own particular problems—too little space, too many third-rate films to write about, the whole, new business of commenting on what Freda Bruce Lockhart calls “part art, part industry and part mechanised technique”. This questionnaire was not intended as an exhaustive survey of the critic's position, nor was it expected to produce any very startling statements or results. The idea was to clear the ground as to the relations between critics and film-makers. Critics tend to write about artists, artists to complain to other artists of what the critics have written; the two seldom meet and talk together. There seemed a case for investigating what each thought of the other, and what desires for solidarity, or fervent disclaimers of the idea, might be elicited by some of the questions. Perhaps, by implication, the answers may throw some light on various aspects of the film-maker's and film critic's work today.

Though we received, especially from film-makers, some eloquent silences, the response has been in general gratifyingly forthcoming and thorough. We would like to record our sincere thanks to all those listed above.

Questions to Critics

1. “The freedom of the critic”: do you think this is illusion or reality? What pressures, if any, against this freedom have you been conscious of in your career as a film critic?

FRED MAJDALANY: Reality. None.

JYMPSON HARMAN: During 32 years of film criticism in the London *Evening News* nobody in Fleet Street has ever forced me to express an opinion contrary to my own. A few rare complaints from the film industry have been easily dealt with. “Pressures” need not arise in connection with knowledgeable, competent and dignified criticism.

ROGER MANVELL: No one has ever thought me worth corrupting, certainly not bribing! . . .

DILYS POWELL: All freedom is illusory (but you have to behave as if it were real). No pressure of any kind from my employers, who have always given me complete liberty to write as I please and supported me in any consequences; pressure (unsuccessful) years ago from an American company, but I think it is time to drop that story, which is beginning to bore me.

PAUL DEHN: For me, today, the freedom of the critic is a reality. I am subjected to no pressure either by the advertising department at Kemsley House or by my editor, who indefatigably disagrees with many of my opinions. It was not always so . . .

FORSYTH HARDY: For me, on balance, reality. There was a short period, when I started writing film criticism, when the editor suggested that I might curb my most outspoken comments, but I would not represent that this was anything other than good sense.

ROBERT OTTAWAY: I doubt whether there is much open interference with the opinions of critics for national newspapers and periodicals—though the editorial judgments of films in local and provincial papers are obviously guided by the advertising revenue. . . . There is, I think, an unconscious pressure working on a popular paper critic not to give his own estimate of a film's value but to assess its popularity with his particular audience. More often than not, of course, the two verdicts will be similar, if the critic has been shrewdly chosen for that market. When they clash, the critic may be dishonest and take the low road. . . . I have taken the Gallup pollster's way out and said, in effect, “I don't like it—but thousands will.”

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE: The critic's freedom is not altogether either reality or illusion. In most of my work I have not been explicitly limited. But as a whole it does not represent my

complete choice of either subjects or treatment—but rather as much of it as I could obtain space for and sign with integrity. On the other hand, neither film producers nor editors have ever even suggested that I should write what I do not believe. With growing experience I have learnt to select as much as I could of what I considered both desirable and practically possible.

FREDA BRUCE LOCKHART: In this country, as nearly a reality as possible—now. The only case of pressure which I recall in my own experience was on my very first job as a film critic, sixteen or seventeen years ago. I was summoned by the Editor and heavily ticked off because I had devoted the “double spread” review-page to two films from a company which did not advertise. With unabashed innocence I answered nonchalantly: “Oh well, I expect they will now.” And, of course, next week, they did.

ERNEST LINDGREN: I have never been conscious of any pressures, but my experience as a critic is so limited and so specialised that I really have no right to answer this question at all.

A fairly strong majority declares itself free from all pressures. Although Freda Bruce Lockhart mentions a minor difficulty in the past, Dilys Powell unsuccessful pressure “years ago from an American company,” Robert Ottaway notes an “unconscious pressure” on the critic of a popular paper to assess popularity rather than to review, and Catherine de la Roche suggests difficulties in her work as a film correspondent rather than critic, the general feeling is that freedom is a “reality”.

2. Do you consider that a critic has a double obligation, to the film and to his public, and do you ever find these two obligations difficult to reconcile?

PAUL DEHN: Yes to both questions. But the reconciliation can be effected by a critic's stating what he believes the film has set out to do, whether it has succeeded in so doing, and (if it has succeeded) leaving the reader to decide whether he would like to see that particular sort of success.

FRED MAJDALANY: Obviously he has. The soundest judgments are valueless if (a) they are insufficiently entertainingly written for the reader to want to read them, or (b) if they are incomprehensible to the reader for whom they are intended. A critic who cannot reconcile these two obligations should transfer to some other form of employment.

JYMPSON HARMAN: Of course the critic has responsibility to film and public—the responsibility to analyse the product

wisely and fairly in order to persuade the public to appreciate it.

DILYS POWELL: Have been saying for years that a critic has a double obligation. Of course it is difficult to carry out in a newspaper. You can't do justice to all the contributors to the week's films in a thousand words; and if you could the words would be unreadable and therefore useless to everybody.

ROGER MANVELL: The critic's first obligation is to give a fair evaluation of the film. To achieve this to best advantage he should, however, express his views in a manner most likely to be found readable by the particular public for whom he writes. I see no reason why a critic should modify his views about a film for the sake of his public, only his way of presenting them.

FREDA BRUCE LOCKHART: I have always held the tenet of my distinguished predecessor on *The Tailor*, James Agate. He said that a critic was only under two obligations—to his editor and to the art he serves. (This pre-supposes the editor's responsibility to the readers, naturally.) I might add a third—and to himself.

ROBERT OTTAWAY: I agree with the twin obligation, but I do not think reconciliation is difficult if one can indicate the nature and scope of each film reviewed. Space sometimes makes that difficult, and there is a constant distortion of values in popular papers, in that a film like the Monroe *Niagara* is treated more fully than an adult effort like, say, Menotti's *The Medium*. It often strikes me as unjust that the film artist has to take a bad second place to the film entertainer. But I do not see how that can be remedied.

ERNEST LINDGREN: I consider that a critic has an obligation first to himself (perhaps that is what you mean by his obligation "to the film") and secondly to his public; but these are really only two aspects of the same thing, and I cannot imagine why any conflict should arise between them. More explicitly, a critic first has to make sure that in formulating his views about a film, he is being completely honest with himself. . . . But having done that, there are all sorts of ways in which he can express those views, and in considering which he will choose, he must consider both the occasion and the public for which he is writing. I have always believed, in particular, that one can be honestly critical without unkindness: the criticism may hurt, but at least it need not hurt for the wrong reasons.

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE: Certainly the critic has a double obligation, and I have never found the two conflict in any piece I have undertaken to write. On one or two occasions (because of editorial policy) I have found that, a sufficient measure of truth to be fair to the film and the reader not being permissible, I have declined to treat the subject at all. . . . The least of the conflicts in my mind as a critic has been the responsibility to film and reader: the fairer you are to one, the fairer to the other. It may be technically more difficult to give analytical constructive criticism in a readable, entertaining form; it may be true that certain editors ask you to "angle" articles artificially, rather than in the way the subject itself demands; and it is often true that the critic has not space enough to do justice to a noteworthy film. But in itself the task of being as fully truthful in appraising a film as possible is, as I see it, an equal responsibility to both the film and the reader.

FORSYTH HARDY: If all film-makers were artists I would suggest that the critic has a double obligation; but with many films, blatantly commercial in aim, it would be irrelevant to apply the standards of criticism normal in the other arts. I would say that the critic's obligation to his public comes first; but that he should never lose the opportunity when it comes his way of meeting his obligation to the film which merits it.

The double obligation (and the critic's obligation to himself) is admitted by all, though some critics have their varying difficulties—lack of space, power of a big circulation—in fulfilling it. There is general agreement that it must be fulfilled, and that a critic must trust his own judgment—if not, he "should transfer to some other form of employment".

3. Do you ever visit studios while films are being made? If so, do you find it valuable? Or if not, why not?

JYMPSON HARMAN: Naturally and essentially. Knowledge of what it takes to make a film is indispensable to knowledge-

able criticism.

FORSYTH HARDY: I occasionally (once or twice a year) visit studios while films are being made. I am usually interested in the work of the director and find it valuable to see him first hand. Such an experience can make it easier to evaluate the contribution he makes to the film.

ERNEST LINDGREN: I have done so, and have certainly found it valuable in contributing to general background knowledge. I do not see how any critic can write knowledgeably and sympathetically about films unless he knows, and if possible has seen, how they are made. I do not consider, however, that seeing a film in production helps one in any way to criticise that particular film, which I take to be the point raised here. On the contrary. . . . The critic who allows himself to become engaged in production, even if only to the extent of a spectator on a one-day visit, is in danger of losing some part of the detachment which as a critic he will be expected to bear on the finished film. The only thing which should occupy the critic is what appears on the screen.

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE: Yes, I do. I could not do my job otherwise. My work as a film correspondent has usually been done in my capacity as critic: features which may not be conventionally in the form of reviews are commissioned from me and presented as a critic's appraisals of film artists' contributions to the cinema. For this reason it is understood that whatever I see in studios or learn in interviews is material for my personal interpretation. What I learn from contact with film personalities supplements what I discover from the "internal evidence" in the film itself. It is invaluable in so far as it adds to my knowledge. Doubt is sometimes expressed as to whether knowing some film-makers personally and others only from their work, I can be unbiased and fair. I hope and think I can, if only because films so very often turn out to be different from expectations. . . . I do think studying production is valuable and I do not think it prejudices the critic's ultimate judgment. Provided, of course, he has a modicum of mental discipline.

ROBERT OTTAWAY: Being a columnist as well as critic, I occasionally visit studios, but I do not see how such sorties can sharpen a critic's awareness. . . . After all, one doesn't have to be a juggler oneself to judge the balancing abilities of others. On the other hand, I think an acquaintance with film techniques and studio practices is helpful to a critic as a by-product of his function. In the main, it gives him more respect among film-makers themselves. . . . This lessens the gap between them, and that seems to me good.

PAUL DEHN: I think that every critic should have been present throughout the evolution of at least one film . . . and that this should preferably be done *without* his being allowed to criticise the finished product. Ideally, this means that a critic should write a synopsis, expanded treatment and screenplay of his own and be "in on" the picture's subsequent production. The insight gained by such an experience will be sufficient to make unnecessary a studio visit to pictures which, later, he will *have* to criticise. I find such studio visits invariably bias me in a film's favour, and I have abandoned them.

FREDA BRUCE LOCKHART: Hardly ever now, feeling that I have done my time of studio floorwalking—and sitting. I think it valuable, indeed essential, for a critic at some stage to learn his way about the studio in general, and to keep pace with major developments. But not necessarily to visit particular sets for particular productions.

DILYS POWELL: No. I used to visit studios; after all, a critic ought to have at any rate a general idea of what goes on when a film is made. But I found the results merely distracting from a critical point of view. And the practice itself now strikes me as impertinent. Why should an artist or a craftsman have to put up with being observed at work? I should not like busloads of film technicians to watch me writing.

ROGER MANVELL: I avoid visiting studios whenever possible, because I usually feel in the way. But I am fortunately placed because I have every opportunity of discussing films with film-makers away from the studios through the nature of my job. I do not think that a studio visit during working hours gives one full scope for this. But I am strongly in favour of critics learning about the craft of film-making and its technical problems and meeting film-makers whenever possible for discussion. They can learn endlessly from each

other.

FRED MAJDALANY: Hardly ever. I find it boring and a waste of time. Also I consider it undesirable for a critic, whose job is to appraise the finished product, to become immersed in the technical mumbo-jumbo of the studio. It is his job to eat the pudding, not to meddle in the kitchen.

Seven out of ten agree, with reservations, that some studio-visiting is valuable, and three are against it (Dilys Powell: "impertinent"; Manvell: "I usually feel in the way"; Majdalany: "boring and a waste of time"). There is some feeling that visiting "particular sets for particular productions" can later blur critical judgments, both from those who are in principle for and against the practice.

4. Do you believe in personal relationships with film-makers or do you avoid them? Please give reasons.

FORSYTH HARDY: I have never found it embarrassing to have personal relationships with the directors. They have a very shrewd appreciation of the value of their work, good or bad, and I haven't found it difficult to talk to them about it. On the other hand, I have never sought to have personal relationships with film-makers for whose work I did not feel some respect. This could be called avoidance.

ROGER MANVELL: I see no reason why critics should not develop personal friendships with film-makers. What matters is the proper understanding of the film as a medium, and it is the practising film-maker and the practising critic who can together best discover its capacities. But the critic should not out of personal friendship for the film-maker feel inhibited in the public expression of his views. The film-maker is the gainer when a good critic is fair and frank in his criticism.

JYMPSON HARMAN: It depends what you mean by "personal relationships". I have probably known more stars and film-makers "personally" than any other British film critic and these relationships have never affected or been affected by my criticism. The question is rather insulting to both sides.

ERNEST LINDGREN: I suppose the implication here is that personal friendships (or enmities) with film-makers may disturb one's critical balance when it is necessary to review their works. I have no experience which qualifies me to answer this one, but I imagine the danger is a real one, and may impose a strain on any genuine friendship between a film-maker and an honest professional critic; one has occasionally known instances of critics showing the influence of such personal sympathies. Ordinary social relationships, however, need surely be no more difficult than those which exist between members of different parties in the House of Commons.

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE: Distinction should be made here between professional and private relationships. In my case nearly all my "personal" contacts are cordial professional relationships. These present no problems and are only an advantage. . . . But really private relationships—house to house entertaining, circles of mutual friends (cliques, sometimes)—here there is danger. It should be and sometimes is compatible with clear judgment and more profound understanding. But I have known of friendships lost and the subjects, in consequence, being awkward for the critic to tackle. For in private relationships the artist's relatives take a hand—wives, in-laws, and sundry self-appointed champions, and that may lead to labyrinths of conflicting loyalties and embarrassments.

ROBERT OTTAWAY: It depends how close the relationships are. On the nodding and two-drink level, they are useful, for the critic is in his way a servant of the cinema and not its executioner. It is important that the barrier between critic and film-maker should be broken down, and this can only be accomplished over friendly, talkative pints. On the other hand, the bonds should not be too tight. It is hard to keep an independent mind about the work of someone to whom one is personally attached.

FREDA BRUCE LOCKHART: Without dogmatically avoiding them, I certainly don't seek such relations. My reason is probably pure weakness. Such relationships may be a source of enlightenment, but they are almost certain to be one of embarrassment—embarrassment to the critic's exercise of professional integrity and freedom as well as to his personal relations.

DILYS POWELL: I avoid them as far as possible. They are

dangerous to a critic, who if he is a sensitive person (and a critic ought to be exceptionally sensitive), will find it painful to be impartial about the work of a friend.

FRED MAJDALANY: Like any other personal relationships those with film-makers happen or they don't happen. As a general rule, however, I personally prefer to know as few film-makers as possible because it is harder to judge the work of friends than that of strangers. When writing about friends one tends to be much harder on them simply because they are friends.

PAUL DEHN: I avoid them as much as I can. Unless one's a perfect beast, it's impossible to attack a friend or acquaintance for bad work with the same objectivity as one attacks a stranger. ("Mr. X", one says, "battled gallantly with a thoroughly unsatisfactory part", rather than "Mr. X gave a thoroughly unsatisfactory performance.") This, I think, is the most difficult of all the problems we film critics have to face—because we may, among film-makers and actors or actresses, discern the possibilities of friendships that could prove professionally, intellectually, emotionally or (indeed!) erotically profitable. . . . ideally, we should aim at a relationship which makes it possible to consult film-makers without being friends with them. This never seems to happen. I do feel strongly that nobody should be allowed to combine serious film criticism with film gossip-writing; and even (oh dear!) that no serious critic should make a habit of attending film-receptions.

Six believers—with some reservations that too close friendships may affect critical judgments—and four agnostics, who find it disagreeable or embarrassing to have to criticise a friend's work in print.

5. In the other arts, the line between criticism and creation is less sharply drawn than in the cinema (novelists are often literary critics, etc.). In France, Clair and Carné began as critics and, like other French directors, have continued to write on the cinema. In England, only the documentarists have regularly combined both functions. Do you think this is a pity? Would you like to see British directors more articulate in their views on films and film-making?

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE: Yes. The expert's view is always valuable. And, journalism being what it is (brightness being infinitely more highly valued than knowledge), there are so many writers sitting in judgment on their betters that more authoritative writing to redress the balance is desirable.

PAUL DEHN: Yes—but, even more, I'd like to see film critics trying to write at least one feature film and at least one script or commentary for a documentary. This makes me an unctuous, self-satisfied prig, because I have done both—but I think that by doing both I did improve my critical equipment.

ERNEST LINDGREN: One must recognise that the creative faculty differs substantially from the critical, and good artists do not always make good critics, nor are critics always frustrated artists. Indeed, a lively critical ability, which demands the exercise of the reason, may hamper creation, which at its best is intuitive: I think this happened with Coleridge. Nevertheless, when artists have engaged in critical writing, it is often far more valuable and to the point than that of the professional critic (it is not surprising that novelists write criticism, for they are writers, after all: but one also thinks of Leonardo or Van Gogh). I, therefore, certainly regret that film-makers are not more articulate. No artists are more dependent on public support; that support, if they invoked it, would be abundantly forthcoming, at least from the great minority of perceptive filmgoers. Yet between makers and public yawns a gulf. . . . I sometimes wonder if it is because film-makers are frightened rather than inarticulate: frightened of giving possible ammunition to critics they feel to be hostile, frightened of seeming pretentious to their colleagues, frightened of labelling themselves as highbrow to potential employers or backers. Whatever the cause, I think it is a pity.

ROGER MANVELL: Critical evaluation is itself a creative activity, but criticism is expression through words not motion pictures. A critic with a creative capacity as a film-maker will naturally enough do his best to get into production. Alternatively, film-makers may tend at first to seem shy of writing or speaking in public about films. Our experience at the Academy has been that this shyness can be overcome; there are now many film-makers who can speak effectively about their work,

and a few who have become good writers.

JYMPSON HARMAN: Artist-creators are usually bad critics because their interests lack breadth and tolerance. This applies particularly to a functional art such as film-making. Films, like plays, need audiences and while the creators take so much money out of their business they must reconcile themselves to mass audiences. Which don't appreciate art. Honest and enlightened criticism can help considerably to create an appetite for art but it will never condemn a good job of work made for a specific purpose because it fails to be an artistic gem. Too few of today's film critics understand the process of film creation and the content of screen art. So if the creators must write—let them do so. It all helps. The need is to educate the public—not to snarl at it or ridicule.

FORSYTH HARDY: I would like to see film-makers in this country write more often about their work. I think it might help them to clarify their ideas and the reaction of critics and other film-makers might be stimulating. On the other hand, I can see difficulties if they engaged in regular criticism of the work of other film-makers. The simplest answer is that they would not have the time.

ROBERT OTTAWAY: Even in France, the criticism of novelists like Mauriac and Gide is more useful as an illumination of their own purposes than as an interpretation of its subjects. With that in mind, I think it would be enormously helpful for directors to discuss in print their attitudes to their own work and to that of others. Reed on Asquith, and Asquith on Reed, would be both stimulating and valuable—but not in the way that Dilys Powell on Michael Powell might be instructive. The film-makers' contribution would enlighten us on method and technique and artistic purpose; the critic's business is to assess the man, from outside, as an artist. The two functions are different, but complementary.

FRED MAJDALANY: The sharper the line the better. But an academic question this, surely? I cannot imagine anyone giving me £250,000 and telling me to make a picture for the good of my critical faculty—though any offers along these lines will be favourably considered. As for the second part

of the question, my experience of film directors is that they are better at doing than explaining—though, of course, there are many brilliant exceptions. I am all for them being more articulate, as long as they do it entertainingly.

FREDA BRUCE LOCKHART: No, no, no! Of course there is writing about films which can and should be done by film-makers—but *not* film criticism. Heaven defend us from seeing film criticism turned into the undignified spectacle of much literary criticism (which you cite) and director, screen writers and company using the columns of the Press to pat, scratch, bite or stab each other's backs.

The answer to these three last questions depends on a fundamental choice of approach to film criticism. Cinema is, as everybody knows, part art, part industry—and also part mechanised technique. I have always believed that critics can serve their function most usefully by standing as far as possible aside from the commercial and technical trees to look at the wood on the screen.

DILYS POWELL: Certainly not. There is no reason to believe the directors would do any better than the professional critics. They would know more, but knowledge is not enough. Criticism is a writer's business and writing (though nobody recognises this nowadays) is a skilled profession, requiring for its proper practice discipline, devotion and a lifetime. To suppose that any director can write is about as sensible as to suppose that any writer can direct. Anyhow, as it is too much pompous bosh is written about the cinema.

Again, a sharply divided opinion. Three critics are dubious as to whether film-makers should write more, Majdalany considering that the line between criticism and creation should be kept sharp (cf. Grierson in the next questionnaire), Freda Bruce Lockhart that the literary criticism cited in the question is often an "undignified spectacle," and Dilys Powell that criticism should be left to the professionals. The rest would like to see film-makers writing from time to time—not as regular critics—and Paul Dehn adds that a critic should write at least one script.

Questions to Directors

1. Do you think that film critics are, on the whole, a good or a bad thing? On balance, have you been more pleased than annoyed with them?

SIR MICHAEL BALCON: Film critics at one time or another have put me through every mood in the calendar from the triumphant to the suicidal. However, on balance I think I have been pleased by them slightly more often than annoyed, and I therefore consider them a "good" thing rather than a "bad" thing. Whether this balance has been achieved by the qualities of the critics or of the Ealing output I am unable to say. Clearly I cannot be accused of excessive objectivity.

ROBERT HAMER: (a) Any film-maker who claims to be able to set aside considerations of *amour-propre* is a demonstrable hypocrite, but—as objectively as possible—I would answer that criticism is a good thing, even if all individual critics are not. (b) I have been pleased with the ones I respect, even if they react unfavourably, provided that they have apparently taken the trouble to assess intention as well as achievement.

HENRY CORNELIUS: On the whole a good thing from the public's point of view, inasmuch as a consistent critic can become a reliable box-office tipster. Difficult to say whether on the whole a good thing from the industry's point of view—but on balance would say, Yes.

JOHN GRIERSON: It is not a question of whether you like it or don't. The creation of a body of criticism is the other half of the creative act itself. At one extreme some artists are incapable of creating a body of criticism for themselves—notably the lyrical talents. At the other extreme, some critics are incapable of the act of faith involved in the creative act. In between there are all sorts of degrees of relationship. However it comes, the test is whether your critic is really conscious of what it is all about. . . .

T. E. B. CLARKE: A good thing. On balance, pleased. I find it difficult to be frank without appearing to pay the critics a left-handed compliment: but my experience has been that

they can do much good for a film they like, and less harm, relatively, for one they dislike. In other words, good reviews will nearly always set a film off to a good start, but poor reviews do not necessarily mean that the film is going to prove a failure.

CHARLES CRICHTON: Entirely a good thing—like the foreign irritant in the oyster. The existence of critics is a necessary stimulant to film-makers and audiences alike. They are, to me, almost permanently annoying; perhaps I'm the pearl in the oyster!

BRIAN DESMOND HURST: If above corruption—Yes.

In general, film-makers unanimously consider criticism "a good thing," though some find it difficult to be objective about this. Grierson, however, takes objectivity for granted, and considers that criticism is "the other half of the creative act."

2. What do you consider the major faults of contemporary film criticism, and/or, what would you like to see critics do that they don't?

HENRY CORNELIUS: Major fault—confused basis on which critics operate: some are nothing more than box-office tipsters, others are serious critics believing that serious approach to criticism is an incentive to film-makers to improve standards. Others are purely concerned with building their own jobs by displaying their own style, and have discovered that consistently bad reviews draw increased attention to themselves. I would like critics to be more clear about what they are trying to do, and to judge product within the bounds of what the film-maker concerned set out to do (artistically, economically, etc.), and not from the point of view of what the critic thinks they should or might have done.

ROBERT HAMER: I think that the main fault is not giving good marks for trying. Not every film can be, or aspires to be, a *Bicycle Thieves*, but quite a lot can be deemed to have succeeded within a limited horizon. I would like critics to have, as in New York, earlier viewings of films and, therefore, more time to reflect. Also, I would like every paper to have two critics, alternating—say—fortnightly, or even pub-

lishing in parallel.

T. E. B. CLARKE: The outstanding fault, in my opinion, is a tendency to indulge in flippant wisecracks which sometimes overstep the bounds of fairness and magnify a weakness in a film out of all proportion, in the interest of the critic's own reputation as a wit. I should like to feel that the critics are straining to be as kind as possible to young writers and young directors on the way up. There is, I think, too much of a tendency to slap them down. . . .

SIR MICHAEL BALCON: There are two main faults in the present organisation of film criticism. The first is that critics are expected to see all films. Seeing seven or eight films a week will in time dull the enthusiasm and critical faculties of anyone, of which theory there seems to be living proof. The second is the limited space at the disposal of film critics. This has led to a tendency to dispose of films in a smart sentence or two, which may be good for the popular appeal of the critic, but has little to do with real criticism, makes film producers understandably resentful, and decreases the space available for the discussion of worthwhile films.

CHARLES CRICHTON: I exclude from my answer at least half of the critics in the London Press, on the grounds that they are no more than gossip-mongers. I exclude also the provincial critics, because I do not read them. Many of the better London critics seem to me insufficiently clinical in their approach. They do not discriminate between their own personal taste and the achievement of the film-maker in relation to his own intention. Again, there seems to be a conflict between true critical assessment and purely columnist activity. This perhaps explains why sometimes indifferent films are made to appear interesting and important because of elements in them that become pegs to hang a "good story" on. Conversely, good films often seem to be ungenerously treated because they lack elements that provide opportunities for wit. When minor prejudices obscure true vision, often the result is that minor objections fail to indicate the real stature of a film. *The Beggar's Opera* notices, good though they were, provide an instance of this.

BRIAN DESMOND HURST: Critics should stop retelling the story of a film, they are mostly bad anyway; avoid second- and third-rate witticisms; and be, whenever possible, *constructive*, like Winnington or Powell.

JOHN GRIERSON: (1) We have a lot of ageing characters (my own generation) who, by the dreadful attrition of continuous exposure to the second-rate, have lost their original critical palate. They get by because they are good professional journalists. . . .

(2) There are some younger very good analytic minds—one in particular of a high order—who simply do not find any critical creative challenge in contemporary movie. They are bored and they can't stand the average pace. They are too young to know what the first fine careless rapture was all about. They rightly smash stupid things like *Quo Vadis*, but they are a lost generation nonetheless, incapable of helping because they do not seem to know what to help. The old ones are weary of well-doing and are now largely incapable of it. These others are only stirred when they take their proper revenge on mediocrity. . . .

(3) We have also developed a tribe of verbal hangers-on who make a pseudo-academic study of the cinema. In SIGHT AND SOUND particularly they pass for critics. But they only give the illusion of criticism by repeating what others warmly and with a sense of discovery once said before. They are collators of information rather than illuminators of aesthetic principle. . . . They are like the children at Cambridge who with so much excitement discovered *The Waste Land* 10 years late. Recently they discovered McLaren: this time 15 years late. . . .

(4) Another lot I think of as the gushers. They know the aesthetic high points of movie with a glibness so glib that they like Chaplin even when he is lousy and Flaherty even when he didn't shoot the sequence. They will presently get so caught up with the Importances of the Cinema that no muck from America will be safe from their celebration. Their future is as Press agents.

(5) My sentimental affection is for Critical Group One. They have served me in the past beyond the call of duty. I know, too, how difficult it is to grow old and continue to serve an art which must forever, because of its very conditions of observation, be young in heart and fresh in sight. My

mental interest is in Group Two. That is where the stingo is. Apart from Shulman, I think with respect of three or four others. I hope that, like Shaw, they become playwrights.

(6) The major trouble about contemporary film critics is that they have been reduced to, or are, journalists first and critics second. The fault lies partly in diminishing critical vitality. . . . The critic talks today of pictures and persons. The great ones considered movie. . . . I would like to see critics help the creative process along, as a matter of dedication. The present fashion is to think of criticism in its negative aspect, and that smartness is an adequate consolation for having zero in the belly. They do not know, or have forgotten, that a primary function of criticism is to serve, and humbly serve. The supreme example is Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times*.

Faults of contemporary criticism with the highest votes are the tendency to wisecrack unfairly (6), the absence of a demarcation line between gossip-writing and criticism (3), failure to appreciate the film-maker's intentions (3), and sensibilities blunted by over-exposure to mediocrity (2).

3. Have you ever found published film criticism helpful? Can you give an instance of this?

T. E. B. CLARKE: Yes, indeed! There are so many instances of this that I find it hard to single one out—but as one who has worked mostly on comedies, I have learned from the critics that I am apt to over-exploit a funny situation. I am trying to mend my ways in that respect.

HENRY CORNELIUS: Yes. I have often found critics emphasising points I tried to incorporate in a film unconsciously—thus making them conscious to me—which, negatively or positively, has been of help on future occasions. *Passport to Pimlico* and *Genevieve* were cases in point.

JOHN GRIERSON: Of course. In one single act 25 years ago the critics confirmed me in the effrontery of film-making. I could weep to think how good they once were to the tentative effort. And please remember that every creative effort, young or old, is tentative. Documentary would not have been established without the constructive critical aid of Lejeune on *The Observer*, Lawrence on *The Times*, Hardy on *The Scotsman*, and sundry other characters. . . . Only last year Phil Leacock and *The Brave Don't Cry* were established by the critics—the American critics notably. But what do you mean? Do you mean they help by helping an artist to *make art*? The answer is No, not now. They once did. . . . They created almost all the stars of the late 20's and early 30's . . . picked up and established the really great names in film direction. But I do not know of a single one of the present batch finding anybody or anything. . . . The best they do now is to put nervous artists on the defensive and drive them as speedily as possible to the safety zone of non-art: e.g. Hitchcock.

CHARLES CRICHTON: I find published film criticism useful only in the general sense mentioned in my answer to Question 1. It is not sufficiently informed to correct specific faults in my own work, but it is frequently sufficiently articulate to force me into painful self-criticism.

ROBERT HAMER: (a) *Amour-propre* and fatigue again raise their narcissistic heads. As well ask a marathon runner, prostrate beyond the tape, whether he feels likely to benefit from the opinion of the sports correspondent in the stands. But I think that we would all benefit from reading our notices after a lapse of time, to allow the hysteria to cool.

(b) I take my stand on the Fifth Amendment.

SIR MICHAEL BALCON: Personally I read every word about films with which I am connected, and a great deal about the work of others. It is reasonable to suppose that my ideas must have been influenced by this, even if not in such a direct way that I can quote a concrete example. But, of course, to derive the maximum profit from criticism the film-maker must be able to see his work objectively (and at the very moment when this is most difficult), and the criticism itself must be equally objective—i.e. uncoloured by the personality of the critic. How far either requirement exists, I am not sure.

Three film-makers have found criticism directly helpful, three admit to indirect help or enlightenment, in one case of a "painful" nature (Crichton); two raise the point that notices of a film appear at what is, for the film-maker, the most delicate time. Grierson makes the reservation that, though he once found the critics helpful, the contemporary ones are insufficiently constructive.

4. Do you believe in personal relationships with critics, or do you avoid them? Please give reasons.

CHARLES CRICHTON: I prefer to avoid critics. I believe that personal relationships between critics and film-makers sometimes lead to muddled judgments.

SIR MICHAEL BALCON: Personal contact between film-makers and critics, or at least between those who have a genuine interest in the cinema, is a necessary and helpful stimulus, which I personally welcome. There is only one occasion when I avoid critics: at the Press shows of films with which I have been connected, when a meeting might be embarrassing to both sides.

ROBERT HAMER: (a) Without qualifications—the former. (b) Such limited contacts as I have had have been almost invariably helpful in enabling me to understand something of the commercial problems and pressures under which they work, and I venture to hope that the helpfulness has not been unilateral.

HENRY CORNELIUS: I believe in them. I think it helps a critic to know more about a film-maker's intentions, and helps a film-maker to assess a critic's review when he knows the personal strengths and weaknesses of the critic concerned.

T. E. B. CLARKE: I have so many good friends among the critics that I should hate to avoid them, though perhaps it would benefit me if I did, since my best friends among them seem to be my harshest critics. The realisation that our critics are honest has gravely impaired my faith in human nature.

JOHN GRIERSON: The idea recently promulgated that the critic must not know the film-makers, but must judge by what he sees on the screen, is basically silly. It was made by Dilys Powell, I think, in a moment of folly. She is, of course, the kindest and most gracious of critics, and does not at all practise what she preaches. Not knowing film-makers is as silly as to say you can be a racing correspondent by only seeing races; that you don't have to know trainers, jockeys and handlers, not to mention horses. . . . The average racing correspondent knows more and thinks more for his money than any film critic in England. . . . It is not this work or that work that is finally important, but the living process of making it, and it is the death of criticism when this living process—always personal—is ignored for the spacious judgment of decorative results in the decorative and drunken framework of theatrical send-offs.

The situation is different with the film-maker. *A Priori*, he must have the will to be self-sufficient and survive, if need be, without any critical help whatsoever. That is what the creative act means. But of course no one wants it to be so. Let me describe the present situation as I personally see it. In racing terms, I am like a trainer who runs a few horses. Occasionally I win, and I don't mean Selling Plates either. Now, if it were a matter of horses, the Scout or Hotspur or Augur or Solon or Templegate would know every horse in my stable, just in case. Do the film critics? Not on your life. What does your average film trainer do? He begs the bastards to see his horses; he even hires a man at great cost to beg the bastards. You will pardon me if personally I don't. . . . I do not seek the critics' acquaintance. I could do with them, certainly. It would sometimes ease matters, but on pressure I can make the record without them. Any film-maker worth his salt must will to say so. It must surely be for the critics, never for the film-makers, to seek acquaintance. . . .

Five fairly emphatic believers, one agnostic: a majority slightly higher in proportion to the critics' answers to this question. Crichton dissents on the grounds that such relationships can lead to confused judgments; one reservation apart, that critics should be avoided at Press shows, where "a meeting might be embarrassing to both sides," no film-maker raises the point which disturbed some critics—the difficulty of combining friendship with critical honesty.

5. Do you think that critics can influence significant numbers of the public to stay away from, or come to see, particular films?

ROBERT HAMER: Anyone who could answer this one would qualify as God's gift to Wardour Street. In the case of an over-all favourable Press, one smiles "Yes"; in the case of the opposite, one smarts "No." To answer a question with a question—has any public survey ever been conducted?

JOHN GRIERSON: Of course they do. In spite of all the pretence by the business people, the critics are the initial makers and managers of the public's willingness to see a movie. I think they are monstrously influential. Ironically, the less they are critics and the more they are good popular journalists, the more colossal is their influence. No wonder so many production knees are bowed to the least significant critics in the country. . . . There is, of course, another argument deriving from (a) *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* and (b) *Queen of Spades*. The critics lost on both, both ways.

SIR MICHAEL BALCON: There are certain kinds of accepted star and story values which will still make a film successful at the box-office, regardless of what the critics say. On the other hand, films lacking in so-called production values, which depend on the quality of the story, the direction and the acting, are certainly affected by their critical reception. If the basic idea of the type of film we make at Ealing, for example, does not quite come off, then what the critics say can make a great deal of difference. However, the third force, word-of-mouth recommendation, should not be forgotten since it has repeatedly been proved to have the power to overcome both lack of production values and adverse criticism.

HENRY CORNELIUS: Yes. Particularly in West End theatres. Meek, mild, wishy-washy reviews making a film appear insignificant, will damage business. Strong reviews—very good or very bad—will help business.

T. E. B. CLARKE: A good review will attract more customers than a bad review will turn away.

CHARLES CRICHTON: With certain kinds of pictures—yes. The week-end business in major West End cinemas can be greatly affected by the critics. If this business is good, it helps to build up an extensive word of mouth publicity in greater London. Other pictures sometimes owe their audiences almost entirely to the enthusiasm of the critics. Am I right in saying that both *The Window* and *Strange Incident* were widely shown in this country largely as a result of the representations of some of the leading critics? On some pictures, the critics have little influence. Popular stars like Bing Crosby or Bob Hope, or a genius like Charles Chaplin, can draw crowds without the need for enthusiastic Press notices.

BRIAN DESMOND HURST: "Significant" numbers, yes, but are these many? In general, I think it is proven that as far as the general public is concerned, critics have no effect.

As might be expected, very conflicting answers: two suggest that critics can be very influential in helping good films without immediate box-office appeal, while Grierson counters this with the example of Queen of Spades. Hurst questions whether the number of people influenced to go to such films is, anyway, "significant." There is general feeling that a naturally box-office film cannot be harmed by adverse notices, and that critics have more influence in the West End than elsewhere.

6. In the other arts, the line between criticism and creation is less sharply drawn than in the cinema (novelists are often literary critics, etc.). In France, Clair and Carné began as film critics and, like other directors, have continued to write on the cinema. In England, only the documentarists have regularly combined both functions. Do you think this is a pity? Would you yourself like to write about films as well as make them.

SIR MICHAEL BALCON: This question is as confused as confusing. Novelists and literary critics are much more closely related than their counterparts in the cinema; they use the same grammar and work in the same medium. No distinction is made between the kind of criticism under discussion, a regular Press column on recent releases, and writing "on the cinema." Do Clair and Carné work in the former field? English documentarists have rarely combined the function of film-maker and critic, but have more often been sociologists using film and criticising film from a sociological point of view—*vide* Grierson and Flaherty.

As for the last part of this question, I have often been tempted to leap into print about some film I have just seen; but on second thoughts, I agree that it is a good thing that I am not allowed to. I could not guarantee my impartiality,

(continued on page 112).

HOMAGE TO TWO FILM-MAKERS

V. I. Pudovkin

1893-1953

"Mother".



During the 'thirties John Grierson, writing about Eisenstein, said of him—"He is not a poet like Pudovkin, whose conceptions are themselves emotional and uplifting." This hit the nail right on the head. With his immensely ranging and complex genius Eisenstein could flash lightning around us until we became almost blind to the furnaces which Pudovkin was quietly stoking from time to time.

Pudovkin was not complex. He was, to quote the title of one of his films, a simple case. Deceptively simple. For his simplicity was that of a great artist.

When you read the race-course episode in *Anna Karenina*, you do not at the time realise the incredible ingenuity of timing, suspense and construction which Tolstoi expended in leading up to Anna's confession to Karenin. You are simply carried away by the events, the feelings and the relationships portrayed. In the work of Pudovkin (who incidentally once remarked to me that *Anna Karenina* was the film he would like to make next), you find the same deceptive element. Sequence after sequence in *Storm Over Asia* could be used to illustrate this point; for instance, the execution of Bair by the nervous soldier, while the general and his officers discover his potential value as a puppet ruler—a sequence which leads immediately into the fantastic operation by which Bair is brought back to life.

One can go further and say that in his most important film, *Deserter*, Pudovkin over-reached himself by attempting an elaboration for which the cinema was not, and is not yet, ready. The interweaving of plot, location and character in *Deserter* is absolutely fantastic. The real beauty, the real feeling of many of its sequences has, to my mind, seldom been paralleled in the history of the cinema. If this film is not successful as an entity, it does at one stroke extend the horizons of film right through 3-D and out the other side.

It might be dangerous to stress this affinity with the novelist (by the way, I should have mentioned Dostoevski as well as Tolstoi), but it is worth noting that Pudovkin said (in 1951): "... The cinema, directly derived from dramatic art, in its development departs from the drama and comes closer in essence to the novel."²

Here perhaps is the problem to which Pudovkin devoted most of his life. He needed the scope of the novel. But in his search for realism he hung on like grim death to the best the theatre could give him—the power of the actor. Unlike Eisenstein, he used actors right from the start—Baronovskaia and Batalov are as important to *Mother* as is Cherkasov to *Suvorov*.

A follower of Stanislavski, Pudovkin believed that the ultimate realism he sought must come not only from the immediate use of purely filmic technique, but also, and vitally, from an intensity of expression created by the right actor working with the right director. He said: "The whole point about the actor is to use the emotional values at the right moment. . . . The object, when you actually come to the shot, is to achieve the maximum from your actor, and this is impossible if either the director or the actor are thinking about the machinery."²

The characters in Pudovkin's films are not types and faces, seen from outside, ingeniously puppeteered, juxtaposed. They are real people, and unforgettable.

Curiously enough—or is it really a logical development?—Pudovkin's excursions into documentary shooting succeed somehow in achieving—at times, but not always—a similar intensity. To this day I shall never really know whether the old man who looks through the railings in the Hamburg docks, and passes over his lips a despairing tongue, is an actor or not. But I do know that this imperishable image, one of many from *Deserter*, was not achieved by running round with a hand-camera shooting candid snapshots. It is an image which comes from the intense poetry which Pudovkin concentrated in every film in which he truly believed.

The other great quality in all Pudovkin's work is his sense of space. Few directors have ever achieved such a sense of distance, of immensity, as he does in *Storm Over Asia*. Possibly no director except Flaherty possessed, with this sense of space, the ability to relate man so intimately to his environment. Nearly all Pudovkin's films depend in large part on spatial contrasts—an enormous opening-up of the screen followed by an equally violent closing-down. This juxtaposition of narrow set-ups with their reverse is particularly noticeable in *Suvorov*, and, of course, in his masterpiece, *Storm Over Asia*. It is possible that the greatest sequence in all cinema may be the visit of the interventionist general and his staff to the Grand Lama (who turns out to be a baby). Here the suffocating atmosphere of the Lamaserai, crowded with priests and images seen through a haze of incense fumes, is broken into by a series of scenes in total contrast, as the partisans fight with the soldiers on a vast prairie milling with frightened cattle. Pudovkin links these two elements by a fantastic shot of the courtyard of the Lamaserai, which earlier we have seen swirling with ceremony and dance. Now it is empty, save for the tiny figure of a soldier running across it. But in the foreground is the elaborate ornamentation of the roof, and this relates directly to the complex ornamentation of the audience hall. As the background is completely blank until the ant-like soldier runs in, there is an ambivalent moment where your sense of space is deceived; are you in wide open spaces, or is this a close-up of an image's guardian-filigree in the audience chamber?

Add to all this the deeper significance of the Lama sequence, which bursts into something frighteningly unanalysable when, surrounded by the pomp and vapourings of the prelates, politicians and soldiers, the baby decides (after prolonged thought) to laugh, and you have a perfect example of the work of a man who pioneered the real purposes and possibilities of the cinema.

It may be that of recent years Pudovkin's importance has been slightly lost to view, though his two books *Film Technique* and *Film Acting* still remain essential reading for all serious film-makers. His later films—other than *Suvorov*—have not been readily available here. Nor, judging by his experiences with *The Happiest* and *Admiral Nakhimov*, was he any better able than Eisenstein to adjust himself to the deviations of Soviet film policy. But in the final assessment of the cinema, his name will stand as high as any, and higher than most.

BASIL WRIGHT.

² Interview with the author, Moscow, 1937.

¹ Anglo-Soviet Journal, Autumn, 1952.

Jean Epstein

1897—1953

Being about the same age as the sound film myself, I am one of the generation that was astonished when the characters in *Modern Times* didn't talk. Of course, since that time, I have seen *Potemkin*, *Caligari*, *La Charrette Fantôme*, *The Kid*, *Greed*, *Metropolis*, *Chapeau de Paille d'Italie*, etc., but I have never been as fascinated by silent images as I was by Jean Epstein's, whose shadows have outlived him. Again, I had never before realised how much the screen lost when it was allowed to talk. Living in a white frame, Epstein's phantoms take on an independent existence, a true gift of mystery and enchantment.

After having seen for the first time, at the rate of three a day, most of Jean Epstein's films, my judgment is somewhat paralysed. What can one say, except that they are beautiful, with the incontestable beauty of master-works? Epstein gave me something I had been vainly searching for in contemporary production (and had failed to find except in Renoir and Ford): a purely cinematic emotion, a beauty based uniquely on rhythm and the plastic perfection of moving images.

While these memories are still fresh, I must try to analyse something of what I found.

Up to *La Chute de la Maison Usher* (1928), Epstein's films seem curiously *demodé*. Certainly, there are some remarkable moments—the night sequence and the execution in *L'Auberge Rouge* (1923), the two lovers meeting by the water's edge and the country fair in *Coeur Fidèle* (1923), the automobile death-race in *La Glace à Trois Faces* (1927); but the "modernistic" and historical styles of decor appear restrictive now. When one remembers that he made these films between the ages of 25 and 29 (he was born in Warsaw, of a French father, in 1897), one is inclined to reconsider this verdict; yet the general impression persists.

La Chute de la Maison Usher stands a little apart from the rest of his work. (It is little known, incidentally, that Bunuel was the assistant director.) The film contains some unforgettable imagery: the vistas of corridors with a wind sweeping down them, the bizarre hangings, guttering candles, the supernatural features of Madame Gance, and the splendid, marvellous, strange and too brief sequence of the burial, in which four men, walking through a landscape stripped bare by autumn, carry a white coffin behind which floats a long white veil. Edgar Allan Poe was not betrayed.

But the real revelation comes with *Finis Terrae* (1929), and continues up to *Le Tempestaire* (1947), films with a love and understanding of the sea, of Brittany, and of simple, noble, hard-pressed people. Before writing of Rossellini and the birth of neo-realism, critics should look at these films by Epstein. All the beauty of the austere images in the final scene of *Paisa* is already there in 1929, in Epstein's figures stretched out on a white sandy beach, scarcely distinguishable from the surrounding rocks.

The actors in these films are not only Bretons and thick-set Breton women, always in mourning for a loved one; they are, too, the unceasing wind, blowing salt water spray along with itself, flattening the drenched manes of horses, swallowing up candle flames, eddying peasant women's skirts already soaked by the rain and the sea, fluttering black veils against



"Finis Terrae".

a grey sky—the wind that twists round trees, bends flimsy grasses, sharpens the sound of horses galloping on the little island of Bannec; and, above all, the sea, that Epstein never tires of photographing—calm, crowned with circlets of foam, swelling, breaking ceaselessly on the rocks, sending up its immaculate foam to fall again, slowly, on succeeding waves; the sea of great storms, sometimes throwing up an oar, sometimes a body, sometimes a necklace, sometimes a mysterious casket, containing, perhaps, *L'Or des Mers*: the sea by which these people are obliged to live, and by which they are punished. Unlike the Flaherty of *Man of Aran*, Epstein does not describe exceptional circumstances, but a people whom he watched living day by day, his eyes opened wide by love. Sometimes, unconsciously, one licks one's lips, astonished not to find the taste of salt on them.

Epstein's films are slow; when their narrative finally reaches its end, it seems to be because life has brought it there. He is never chary of lingering over a detail—on the contrary, his stories are often composed only of details, integrated into a complete fresco. He will dwell on the limbs, the walk of a character if the motion fascinates him, on shrivelled hands, a handkerchief being dropped, a single face. He will contemplate a pool of water with the rain driving into it (*L'Auberge Rouge*), a face reflected in a tarnished mirror (*Coeur Fidèle*), a bleeding hand (*Finis Terrae*), faces that exchange long and slow glances, an Ile de France landscape: or, simply, the sea whose last secret he seems determined to prise out.

His characters are never in a hurry. They live their daily lives under our eyes, performing the innumerable everyday acts and gestures that make up their "plot"; but one doesn't for a moment long for the feverish rhythm of most of today's films, in which nothing is allowed unless it advances the action; the montage of Epstein's films gives them a rhythm which is like the rhythm of breathing.

The term "magician of the screen" has been used and abused. Jean Epstein is one of the few who perhaps deserve it. The little girl in love in *Coeur Fidèle*, and her crippled friend, Lady Usher, the Breton fishermen and their families, the passionate poetic images of men and nature, these will live with the breath of love that Jean Epstein gave them.

CATHERINE WUNSCHER.

ON THE FILM

Thomas Mann

Bernard Shaw, Alistair Cooke and Aldous Huxley, whose essays we have already published in "The Film Folio," all concerned themselves directly at some time with the cinema; Thomas Mann, the distinguished German writer, did not. But he wrote this article at a time—towards the end of the silent period—when a great deal of speculation about the future of the cinema was in the air. His point of view, interesting in itself, is also perhaps characteristic of the serious writer's attitude at the time.

This essay, translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter, first appeared in Past Masters and Other Papers, published in Britain in 1933, and is reprinted by permission of the publishers, Secker and Warburg.

I sometimes allow my thoughts to dwell on the film—one day I shall be uttering them at length. But just now all I can say is, that lately I have come to entertain feelings for this phenomenon of our time that amount to a lively interest, even almost to a passion. I go often to the cinema; for hours on end I do not tire of the joys of spectacle spiced with music; whether it be travel pictures, scenes from the wild, the weekly news of the world, a diverting piece of tomfoolery, a "thriller" or a "shocker," or a touching tale of love. The actors must be good to look at, with a gift of expression, vain if you like but never unnatural; the "story" itself may be vastly silly, provided—as is nearly always the case today—the silliness or sentimentality is set in a frame of scenic and mimic detail which is true to life and to reality, so that the human triumphs persistently over the crude falsity of the performance as a whole.

I used the word phenomenon above—and advisedly, since in my view the film has little to do with art, and I would not therefore approach it with criteria drawn from the artistic sphere, as do certain humanistic-minded and conservative souls, who then in sorrow and contempt turn away their eyes from the offending spectacle as from a base-born and inordinately democratic form of mass entertainment. For me, I despise it myself—but I love it too. It is not art, it is life, it is actuality. Compared with art's intellectual appeal its own is crudely sensational; it is the same as that of life itself upon a passive onlooker, who is at the same time aware that he himself is pretty comfortable and that what he sees is "nothing but a play." At the same time his sensations are heightened by the accompanying music. But now tell me: why is it people weep so, at the cinema? Or, rather, why do they fairly howl, like a maidservant on her afternoon out. We all went to the first performance of *The Big Parade* and met Olaf Gulbransson¹ at the exit. That jolly and muscular Eskimo was drowned in tears. "I haven't wiped my face yet," said he by way of excuse: we stood there together for a while, quite simply, unaffectedly, with streaming eyes. Is that the mood in which one turns away from a work of art, leaves a picture, puts down a finished book? It is true, elderly gentlemen do shed tears, at *Alt Heidelberg*, when they hear "*O alte Burschenherrlichkeit*"; but even elderly gentlemen do not weep over Shakespeare, or Kleist, or Gerhard Hauptmann. Say what you like, the atmosphere of art is cool; it is a sphere of spiritual valuations, of transmuted values; a world of style, a manuscript world, objectively, in the most personal sense, preoccupied with form; a sphere of the understanding—"denn sie kommt aus dem Verstande," says Goethe. It is chaste and elegant, it is significant, it is serene; its agitations are kept sternly at second hand; you are at court, you control yourself. But take a pair of lovers on the screen, two

young folk as pretty as pictures, bidding each other an eternal farewell in a real garden, with the grass waving in the wind—to the accompaniment of the meltingest of music; and who could resist them, who would not blissfully let flow the tear that wells to the eye? For it is all raw material, it has not been transmuted, it is life at first hand; it is warm and heartfelt, it affects one like onions or sneezewort. I feel a tear trickling down in the darkness, and in silence, with dignity, I rub it into my cheekbone with my finger-tip.

And the film has, quite specifically, nothing to do with the drama. It is narrative in pictures. That these faces are present to your sight does not prevent their greatest effectiveness from being in its nature epic; and in this sphere, if in any, the film approaches literary art. It is much too genuine to be theatre. The stage setting is based upon delusion, the scenery of the film is nature itself, just as the fancy stimulated by the story creates it for the reader. Nor have the protagonists in the film the bodily presence and actuality of the human figures in the drama. They are living shadows. They speak not, they are not, they merely *were*—and were precisely as you see them—and that is narrative. The film possesses a technique of recollection, of psychological suggestion, a mastery of detail in men and things, from which the novelist, though scarcely the dramatist, might learn much. That the Russians, who have never been great dramatists, are supreme in this field, rests, without any doubt in my mind, upon their narrative skill.

As an author I have not yet had much luck with the films. *Buddenbrooks* has been filmed,² but hardly to the satisfaction of the friends of that book. Instead of narrating, only narrating, and letting the characters speak for themselves, what has been made of it is a poorish play of merchant life, in which not much remains of the book save the names. A very good Berlin producer did think for a while of filming *The Magic Mountain*; which is not surprising, for a bold treatment of it might have produced a wonderful spectacle, a fantastic cyclopædia, with a hundred digressions into all points of the compass: visions of all the worlds of nature, sport, research, medicine, politics, all grouped round an epic core. What might not have been made simply of the chapter "Snow," with its Mediterranean dream poem of humanity! But it is not to be. Such a production made too great material and intellectual demands. *Royal Highness* is under consideration. It is simple and should succeed; there are good roles, including that always irresistible one of a good dog; and though the subject-matter might be reminiscent of *Alt Heidelberg*, with good settings and well-chosen actors it should be a pleasing piece and very likely a successful one.

¹ A well-known political cartoonist.

² *Buddenbrooks* was filmed in Germany in 1923, directed by Gerhard Lamprecht.

Book Reviews

THE DOCTOR AND THE DEVILS, by Dylan Thomas.
From a story by Donald Taylor. (J. M. Dent, 10s. 6d.)

Reviewed by James Hanley

"The screenplay of *The Doctor and the Devils* is the first to be published in a book before the film has been made. This is no doubt due to the literary quality, unusual in this medium." Quite so. And hardly a breath-taking announcement. The lack of quality in imaginative writing for the screen is a fact long copyrighted, and cannot come with any surprise except to those addicted to *The Book of the Film*. If the imaginative writer is seen in the studio at all, it is generally somewhere at the end of the line, probably lost in the crowd. Oddly enough this turns out to be any number of technicians who have a quite robot-like habit of taking an almost pre-conceived poor view of the writer's vision. A film studio is a monarchy where the director is reigning king. He also has *his* vision. Two kinds of eyes, two different visions; they rarely adjust. One must in the end give way to the other. Inevitably it is the writer. This establishes the limits of the film as Art, not its potentials.

It will be very interesting to see how this story (based on the case of the Edinburgh murderers, Burke and Hare), as conceived in Thomas's poetic eye, eventually transposes to the screen. And I think it was an admirable idea to commission a writer of his stature, with such great gifts, for, though the Knox story remains pure melodrama, even after the lapse of over a century, it is melodrama lifted on to another level. And though in its essential framework Thomas and Bridie might look closely related, the basic difference is just that Thomas level. *The Doctor and the Devils* is here seen with a quite fresh eye. Here we have a mixture of intellect, horror, humanitarianism, sordidness imagined, and un-imagined. The very bone of Edinburgh is revealed. If Rag and Bone Alley is a world, so too is Dr. Knox's Academy, and Dr. Knox's home. We feel the tempo of the time, and every bend and turn and effort of Knox's noisy hour. But then Crusaders, and especially crusaders with messages for mankind, are inevitably noisy. Even "the book before the film" has a message, and so, too, will the film when it is made. Messages are not always good legacies. I think the melodramatic story can ride without one. It is interesting as a story, and nothing need be imposed on it.

What is important in Thomas's treatment of it is that the people living in this jungle live by their own force, and by the fire, even, of their squalid being. If the writer can make us believe in his creations, his task is over, the work done.

Thomas makes us believe in the Knox country and climate. We need not worry about a message. That can go through the door marked Exit.

It would have been strange indeed if Mr. Thomas had not written a brilliantly evocative film play. He has enriched what I call the purely "film language," roamed at will through the whole catalogue of gesture, and the searchlight eye has done some scorifying on the journey, burning away much of the clanking and clanging machinery that so often pre-disposes one to think of the film in terms of industry rather than art. We do get the *essence* of a situation. How admirable, too, that we sometimes find the silent scenes even more revealing than the scenes of action. Mr. Thomas has his own quite decided views about camera potential. But the technical terms, like "dissolving to" and tracking backwards and forwards with the camera, and the "close-ups," can have a disturbing effect on the reading eye. I have read somewhere that *The Doctor and the Devils*, in this presentation, might look like the novel of the future. Another crusader with a message, no doubt. And sometimes, too, there can be answers to messages. Judged by some contemporary standards the novel might well end up by being written in a very private language. The screen play on Dr. Knox accepts the evidence of its own limitations. The film *has* limitations. It also poses a question. Mr. Thomas's story being so good, so powerful and revealing in itself, will it be only curiosity that will take us to see the finished film?

Then again, Mr. Thomas might cut quite a figure himself as a film director. Judging by this first screen play he seems to have much enjoyed the venture and the proof of it is in the treatment. The eye picks up so many things, and some it does not put down. I think of what the writer can do with the curl of a lip, the lift of a hand, even a drunken snore carries the weight of its own horror. Sometimes the writer's vision seems far beyond that of eyes. We may say that exaggeration is a key element in Melodrama, but it does not shout at one in the play of *The Doctor and the Devils*. Indeed, we are often struck by the economies that Mr. Thomas has indulged in, words carry their weight, limbs their intimations; this is seen in some of the wonderful close-ups, yet there is no waste, no excess. The form imposes its iron rules. The Knox story is one of a purely animal humanity, and some people on a much higher level, who seemed so often to object to the burden of their own limitations. The fact of a film censorship has made it necessary for the two ruffians named Burke and Hare to have their names changed to Fallon and Broom, and Knox himself is called Rock for the same reason. Knox might be pleased about it, Rock isn't a bad description of a stubborn egoist. It will certainly be interesting to see what Mr. Thomas would make of something nearer to our own day.

The Seventh Art

"Let's knock the sensitive, unstable aspect out of the motion picture business and put some solid momentum in it," urged Universal chief Herc McIntyre. . . . The people were now highly discriminating in their selection of screen entertainment. Distributors and exhibitors must join forces in fighting this trend. (Report in the Australian *Film Weekly*.)



Seventy teachers and clergymen have thought up a startling new cinema trick that makes 3-D and the rest of it look like child's play. They've actually managed to show two talkies in the same room at the same time. . . . It happened at the Visual Aids Conference at Oxford, when delegates had to see so many films that to save time they projected two at once on adjoining walls of the same room. (*The Daily Mail*.)



A fascinating interpretation of the seductive Biblical charmer—and conflicting forces in the early Christian era—*Salome* provides a provocative answer to the enigma that has persisted through the ages: Was she innocent, or guilty? (Publicity hand-out on *Salome*.)

"I went to Scotland, and could find nothing there that looks like Scotland." (Producer Arthur Freed, explaining that *Brigadoon* will be filmed in Hollywood.)



In Rochester, N.Y., the Lake Shore Drive-In Theater urged autoless customers to come out by bus, promised: "When you get here, we'll place you in one of our fifty cars parked inside the drive-in theater." (*Time*.)



Night Without Stars is what the British, who made it, might call a pretty bit of work at silly mid-off. . . . (Opening of a film review in *Time*.)



"This scene is so real I think it may make me sick," said Barbara Stanwyck as she prepared to play the climactic scene in *Titanic*. Producer Charles Brackett edged over to murmur, "Never have so many people behaved so well in the face of tragedy. That's what the picture is really about—the courage and decency of human beings in a time of crisis." . . . As Jean Negulesco, the director, called "Cut", he seemed to be brushing a tear away. (Publicity hand-out on *Titanic*.)

THE WORLD OF ROBERT FLAHERTY, by Richard Griffith. Illustrated. (Victor Gollancz, 21s.)

Reviewed by Herman G. Weinberg

The death of Robert Flaherty at 67 was as great a loss to the cinema as the death of Keats at 26 to literature, perhaps even greater . . . for Keats worked intensely during the brief span of his life, while Flaherty was forced to idle away precious years waiting for opportunities to work. In 30 years he made only five full-length films, one of which, *Elephant Boy*, was so mauled by others in the interests of "audience necessity" as hardly to amount to his work at all. So these four, then—*Nanook*, *Moana*, *Man of Aran* and *Louisiana Story*—plus the three shorts—*Twenty-Four Dollar Island*, *The Land and Industrial Britain* (the first almost unknown and long lost in its complete version)—are all we have of his work. Film-makers of comparable stature, more fortunate, have made as many films in five years. And two of the four Flaherty features named were financed outside the film industry, by private non-film companies. Ergo: in 30 years, the great, glorious motion picture industry which pontificates daily—nay, hourly—about its grandeur, enabled this great artist to make only two feature films the way he wanted to make them—*Moana* and *Man of Aran*. The shorts were also financed outside the film industry, and *Tabu*, despite their initial collaboration, was much more Murnau's film than Flaherty's. We know about the tragedy of *White Shadows in the South Seas* and the abortive New Mexico venture. All this must be known and, if known, reiterated, whenever one speaks of Flaherty, for he, along with Eisenstein and von Stroheim, is one of the three martyrs to the art of the motion pictures, the screen's first martyrs.

And this, when all is said and done, is the sad thought we are left with after reading Richard Griffith's book. Yet it would be wrong to give the impression that this is a sad book—it is, on the contrary, a very genial book, as it needs must be, dealing with so hearty and exuberant a fellow as Bob Flaherty. Most happily, indeed, it is made up, for the most part, of delightfully informal (and informative) extracts from Flaherty's own diaries and letters, and from his wife's and Pat Mullen's accounts of his work. These first-hand reports illumine the Flaherty temperament and method better than anything else possibly could. And for this we must be grateful to Mr. Griffith, who makes them available in so compact and judiciously edited a form. "I wanted to disclose the adventurous exploratory quality in Flaherty's lifework," he says, "and it seemed to me that the most vivid way this could be done was to couch the book in Flaherty's own words and those of his family, friends and companions."

And he reminds us that "it is hard to realise that if he had not been trained as a geologist, Robert Flaherty might never have produced a motion picture." Flaherty spent eight years in the North, searching for minerals, before he made *Nanook*. "He found wealth not in the earth, but in the people of the North." Out of this humanism came all his films, for there is none (save the quasi-abstract *Twenty-Four Dollar Island*) that does not have as its theme the love of man for his fellow-men. In a welter of films which have as their themes the reverse, which cynically exploit human aberrations, this is a great deal. The seraphic films of Robert Flaherty are as the morning dew, bespeaking the earth's first innocence. And if such works elicit only a sardonic smile from those who control the destiny of the film, that only makes them all the more precious to us, who are weary of so much perfumed sheep-dip. The new tricks and gadgets will not save them; they will still have to learn how to make good pictures, which is to say, they will have to give artists like Robert Flaherty a chance to work, and even lesser artists the same chance, so that more first-rate talents can develop.

Let us be thankful again to Richard Griffith for giving us "the Flaherty story" in Flaherty's own words, for his own eloquently laconic style which characteristically combines warmth with scholarship, in bridging the extracts from various diaries, journals and letters, for the seventy wonderful photographs of Flaherty and his films (there is a beautiful and nostalgic one of Murnau and Flaherty together on their yacht, the *Moana*, that is, alone, worth the price of the book), and finally, for giving us a rare vision of the true Flaherty, who "tried to show in his films what he embodied so fully in his

own person, 'the visage that God had meant all men to show to one another.'" I began by speaking of Keats; how better can I conclude than by repeating again those words to which, consciously or not, Flaherty had dedicated his life:

*Beauty is truth, truth beauty,
That is all ye know, and all ye need to know.*

THE OLIVIERS. A Biography, by Felix Barker. Illustrated. (Hamish Hamilton, 15s.)

Reviewed by Jeffrey Bernard

The family tradition of the Church was broken only for the second time in 400 years when Laurence Olivier, encouraged by his father, decided to become an actor. His first stage appearance was in a school production of *Julius Caesar*. He played Brutus, and his performance made an immediate impression on Ellen Terry, who wrote in her diary: "this child is already a great actor." After leaving school, he went to the Central School of Dramatic Art and Speech Training, where he studied under Elsie Fogarty. Later he joined the Birmingham Repertory, where he worked with Ralph Richardson. Then came London, and his first chance as Victor in Noel Coward's *Private Lives*. When the play went to New York, Olivier received his first Hollywood offer.

It had been a steady climb to the top, in complete contrast to Vivien Leigh, who became famous overnight in *The Mask of Virtue*. Korda was at the first night and almost immediately offered her a film contract. She played with Olivier in *Fire Over England*, and the partnership began. In Hollywood, each attained individual success with *Wuthering Heights* and *Gone With The Wind*. It is interesting to read that at this time Olivier remarked that the cinema was a medium incapable of representing Shakespeare without destroying the essence of its poetry and art.

At this point in the book, however, it becomes evident that Mr. Barker is not going to live up to his early promise. His descriptions of the Hollywood scene are rather disappointing, and his anecdotes, though often entertaining in themselves, do not reveal anything much more about his subjects. This sense of inadequacy, it should in fairness be added, is no doubt inherent in the problem of writing biographies about people who are still alive and in mid-career.

Mr. Barker is at his best when writing about the making of *Henry V*. He seems to have got really involved with his subject by this stage, but it is a pity it comes so near the end of the book. He writes lucidly, is generous with factual detail, and the biography is well documented and illustrated; but the result remains rather impersonal. For someone who does not know the Oliviers, their characters remain remote.

LE SURREALISME AU CINEMA, by Ado Kyrrou. Illustrated. (Editions Arcanes, Paris, 870 frs.)

Reviewed by Roy Edwards

This book is written by a convinced surrealist (also the editor of *L'Age du Cinema*). As such it is based on a set of principles which, although offensive to many, can still have a salutary effect: those who read Lindsay Anderson on Jacques Prévert, in the last number of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, will have some notion of Kyrrou's attitude. This includes a resolved anti-Catholicism and, as far as British cinema is concerned, a conviction that *Queen of Spades* and *Dead of Night* ("Quel est le spectateur . . . qui puisse prétendre que Au Coeur de la Nuit . . . est un simple film et rien de plus?") are far better than *Brief Encounter*, which is unmercifully flayed.

Kyrrou sets out to prove that the cinema has a gigantic and apocalyptic rendezvous with surrealism. Whether one agrees with him or not, and it must be admitted that the influence of surrealism is concealed rather than obvious, he gives a fascinating rendering of his thesis. Fortunately there is no mention in these pages of aesthetics, good taste or the film-as-an-Art-Form, because for Kyrrou the cinema is, or could be, a door opening into wonderland and is therefore beyond such intellectual quibbles.

From a general definition of what he has so far received and still expects from the cinema, Kyrrou proceeds to give

account of those films which have meant something to him. These, a summary of surrealist movie preferences, include Méliès, the early German film (naturally), Pearl White and other silent serials, and the Fantômes films which Feuillade based on the astonishing and now, I believe, little read detective romances of Alain and Souvestre, Bunuel, Hathaway's *Peter Ibbetson* (a film "discovered by Breton), and some documentaries, particularly those on the lives of insects and the submarine world, of recent years. There are also interesting pages on such subjects as the quality of Revolution as displayed in certain films, the impossible (i.e. the fantastic, the marvellous, phantoms and dreams), "*le mythe Marlène*", Chaplin and Harry Langdon, these last two being "*génies du Rire Revolté*". Speaking of the French *avant-garde* of the late 'twenties, and of Gance in particular, he makes the excellent and more widely applicable remark: "*Innovations certes, mais purement formelles, et toutes les grandes machines de Gance ne valent pas un seul regard de Chaplin.*" Although many of the conclusions reached (e.g. that *Tabu* is the best film that Flaherty ever worked on and that the films of Van Dyke are superior to his in any case) will set most people by the ears, if they don't ignore them altogether, there remains, for me at least, the notion that if one were actually to see an anthology of films put together by Kyrrou it would be an

unusual and probably valuable experience.

Despite its particular bias, Kyrrou's book is acceptable because he approaches the cinema with a sense of wonder: that is apparent at the very beginning when, using Van Gogh's desire to paint not merely the trunk but the whole life of a tree as a point of comparison, he says: "*Le cinéma peut montrer tout cela, il peut descendre sous terre, monter jusqu'aux plus hautes branches, entrer dans l'arbre, suivre en l'espace de quelques seconds sa naissance et sa mort.*" He also says on the last page that "*Le cinéma est le nouveau mythe de l'homme*" and this statement, whether applied to Kyrrou dreaming of the real identity of the actor who played Nosferatu, or to Mrs. Marion Benda Watson, who annually laid flowers at Valentino's tomb and began her own death there, has a certain basis in truth.

Le Surréalisme au Cinéma is the first volume in a collection to be called *Ombres Blanches*, which announces for future publication a book by Jacques Brunius called *En Marge du Ciné Français* and a study of Vigo by P. E. Sales-Gomez; it is to be hoped that these will actually appear. The stills, from Feuillade's *Les Vampires* and Sternberg's *The Exquisite Sinner* to Bunuel's *El Bruto*, are unusual, well chosen and excellently reproduced.

CORRESPONDENCE

L'Ecran Demonique

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—In reviewing *L'Ecran Demonique* in your last issue, I stated that no reference was made to *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück*. It has now been pointed out to me that this film is in fact mentioned under its French title *L'Enfer des Pauvres*. Mlle. Eisner's work is so important that I am glad of this opportunity to withdraw the one imputation of incompleteness which I made.

Yours, etc.,
BASIL WRIGHT.

7 Campden Hill Gate,
London, W.8.

Erich von Stroheim

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—May I commend Gavin Lambert for his excellent essay on Stroheim, *The Missing Third in the American Cinema*, in last quarter's SIGHT AND SOUND? It was the most judicious appraisal I have yet read of his work, creative processes and frustrations. I would just like to call attention to some factual errors for the record, until such time as I can carry out my "threat" to publish the by now long overdue *Erich von Stroheim: Myth and Reality* in which I hope to clear up, once and for all, the accumulated misconceptions of almost a quarter century about his films in their multifaceted aspects. Ergo:

1. *The Merry Widow* was not set in pre-war Austria but in Montenegro (called Montebianco in the film), before 1914.

2. *Queen Kelly* also was not set in pre-war Austria but in one of the pre-World War I Prussian Duodec States of East Germany, at the turn of the century.

3. Mr. Lambert refers to the "crude and rather absurd melodrama on the mountain top" of *Blind Husbands*, although this episode is most important to the story's denouement and is the crux of its irony. The officer (Stroheim) lies to the jealous husband because the husband, an expert mountain climber, threatens to abandon the officer (who cannot climb by himself at all) there unless the officer admits he's had an affair with the husband's wife. (The officer has not had an affair with her, though he tried to.) Nevertheless, the husband, when he hears this confession, is outraged and abandons the officer on the mountain top, after all, breaking his word. The officer, trying to get down by himself, falls to his death. Thus, Stroheim shows up the rotten character of the "noble" husband. It was very daring for a foreigner to have thus satirised bourgeois respectability in an American in his first picture.

4. The character of Ventucci (Cesare Gravina) in *Foolish*

Wives by no means makes him "a colleague" of Prince Karamzin, just because he supplies the Prince with counterfeit banknotes. Ventucci, a saintly man, is by profession a carver of madonna figures. He supplements his meagre income from his profession by counterfeiting banknotes only for the sake of his feeble-minded daughter, whom he adores. (There was a delicious episode, missing from most versions of this extraordinary film, in which Ventucci carefully examines some banknotes he has received from the Prince in exchange for a batch of counterfeit ones—to make sure the Prince wasn't paying him with some of his own phoney money.)

5. One cannot accuse *Foolish Wives* of being "untidily constructed" without having seen the complete version as cut and edited by Stroheim. Both Universal and all sorts of censorship bodies (official and non-official) made so many cuts in it that it is remarkable that there is any continuity left in the present version at all. (For instance, the American version shown by the Museum of Modern Art runs about 78 minutes, and *doesn't begin* until Karamzin first visits Ventucci. The entire first third of the film is missing.) As another instance of what is missing, is it generally known that after the fire on the Prince's balcony in the Villa Amoroso, the ambassador's wife, from the shock, gives birth to a premature baby? The original version ran 21 reels.

6. The backgrounds of *Foolish Wives* were not "a few stock shots of Monte Carlo" but elaborate and faithfully reproduced sets (many of which are hardly visible in the severely truncated released versions).

7. The Prince is not strangled at the close of *Foolish Wives* but knifed by Ventucci. (This is "planted" early in the story.)

8. For the benefit of your American readers who know only the Museum of Modern Art print of *Foolish Wives*, I would like to add here that what is also missing, that the British version, more complete, contains, is the arrival of the ambassador and his wife (changed here to an American business man and his wife) in Monaco and their reception by the Prince of Monaco; the suicide of the maid after she's set fire to the Villa Amoroso; the previously mentioned birth of the ambassador's wife's child; the discovery by the ambassador that the roulette game at the Villa Amoroso is crooked and controlled by a foot lever under the table; and the entire ending, which seems to be missing from all versions, showing the sewer of Monte Carlo emptying into the Mediterranean: debris of the gay life of Monte Carlo floats by—empty champagne bottles, faded flowers, a woman's slipper, finally the body of the murdered Prince, all churned into a froth and then disappearing into the sea.

9. In *The Merry Widow*, Mae Murray as Sonia (Sally) plays a dancer, not an actress. Also, the Baron's name is not Fedoja but Sadoja (*Sixtus* Sadoja, if you please!).

10. In *Greed* the water in the canteen spills out not over

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the gold pieces but over the baking hot crust of Death Valley. There is (or was) a tremendous shot of the water drying up in a few seconds before McTeague's and Marcus' eyes.

11. More than just the sub-plot of Maria Macapa and Zerkow the junkman is missing from *Greed*, and more than just the early courtship of Trina by McTeague. Another sub-plot, the romance of the elderly couple; the entire prologue about McTeague's alcoholic father; the excursion to the country where after they stuff themselves with food McTeague and Marcus get into a vicious fight; the entire transition from San Francisco to Death Valley, McTeague's flight with the gold; and innumerable shots of the wild fauna of Death Valley.

Yours faithfully,
HERMAN G. WEINBERG.

Hotel Robert Fulton,
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N.Y.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—Mr. Gavin Lambert's article on Erich von Stroheim in your special Hollywood Number makes fascinating reading, indeed. Those who have followed the progress of the film from the days of *The Birth of A Nation* will agree with Mr. Lambert in placing Stroheim in the earliest triumvirate of the American Cinema with Griffith and Chaplin.

As one who happened to be interested in Stroheim's films even before he became famous as the director of *Blind Husbands*, may I seek to be informed as to why it is that his critics have not taken any serious notice of his excellent portrayal as the German officer in *The Heart of Humanity*? It came simultaneously with Griffith's *Hearts of the World*. The former film was directed by the late Allan Holubar, who used to handle the Blue Bird films of Dorothy Phillips for Carl Laemmle's Universal Company.

By the way, and if my memory does not fail me, it was Holubar who had presented Rudolph Valentino for the first time in a leading role opposite Dorothy Phillips in a Universal film called *Once to Every Woman*. Rex Ingram's *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* certainly came afterwards.

As to Gibson Gowland, his is the case of that none-too-frequent phenomenon in art and letters. He will always be remembered for a single outstanding performance as McTeague in *Greed*, verily like Charles Reade for *The Cloister* and *The Hearsh* or Winwood Reade for *The Martyrdom of Man*.

Yours faithfully,
J. B. H. WADIA.

89 Casa da Vinci,
World Reclamation,
Bombay, 18.

(ARNE SUCKSDORFF'S ADVENTURE,

Continued from page 86)

would be suitable for the youngest. At least I had the key to him, and possibly he could act." He is, in fact, splendid, a sunny little fellow, who, in the film, is capable of determinedly holding his own against his father—played with calm authority by Sucksdorff himself.

The Great Adventure has been made independently of any film company. The idea was backed by Dag Hammarskjöld, Swedish Secretary of the United Nations, and this helped Sucksdorff to obtain the money—about £16,000. It was not easy. "Eventually we decided to make a start," he says, "if only with ten kronas. Then gradually we got the funds from several sources, mostly from Swedish tourist organisations." The making of *The Great Adventure*, then, was an act of faith, faith that is reflected in the deeply poetical images. Its theme is tremendous, all-embracing. With a fine sense of measure Arne Sucksdorff has done it justice, expressing it in simple and moving terms. The title of his picture is indeed appropriate.

(QUESTIONNAIRE continued from page 104)

knowing the toil and heartbreak that go into the making of even an indifferent film, perhaps the toil of past or present colleagues. Further, the film industry is a highly competitive business, which again makes it difficult to guarantee impartiality; and in a competitive atmosphere, a film producer's critical comments are very liable to be misinterpreted. Anyway, a critic must believe in his critical powers: so how can a producer criticise somebody's film the same week, or the week after, he has himself scored a resounding flop?

HENRY CORNELIUS: I think occasional reviews by film-makers of other films would be interesting and valuable—more to film-makers than the public; but the method is full of obvious dangers and pitfalls.

CHARLES CRICHTON: I think that intelligent and creative writing by masters of the film craft helps to keep alive a high standard of endeavour among film-makers, and can encourage selective film going. I suppose, therefore, that it is a pity that more is not written in this country. Mercifully for the potential reader, my own ambitions are adequately satisfied on celluloid.

ROBERT HAMER: I suppose so. We practically incessantly talk about films, so only illiteracy or considerations of professional etiquette should interfere.

BRIAN DESMOND HURST: Yes. But am too lazy.

T. E. B. CLARKE: Critics who have worked on films tend, I think, to be kinder than those who have not, since they are conscious of the myriad headaches in the making of any picture. Personally, I should hate to be a critic because I know I should be hopeless at the job. I find it difficult to kill a fly: how then could I be brutal to film-makers whose pre-production torments I would inevitably visualise when viewing even a stinker of stinkers?

JOHN GRIERSON: I shall reduce the question to three questions, and answer each one specifically. (1) Should more film critics make more movies? Some critics, as I have said before, are natural born journalists and will follow their journalistic bent. The best of such will become writers of repute. Those who have any desire to make movies will make movies if they can. True natural born critics are not intended for the creative act.

(2) Should film-makers write more criticism? Anything that would keep some film-makers from speaking to the public through their publicity agents would be a public blessing. One answer is that of course they should, and a thousand times so. The test of literacy would be interesting. On the other hand, would it be important? *With very, very few exceptions, all the greats of movie have been illiterates.* In the deepest sense, movie is the illiterates' art. That is at once its greatness and its confusion so far as critical sophistication is concerned. Only Harman and Billings really seem to understand this. Powell notably doesn't, and is forever trying to make a silk purse out of the sow's ear to which some of us are, of God's need, devoted.

(3) Would I myself like to write about films? Yes, if Lejeune, bless her, will only make room for me. I could at least try to put her own wonderful old stuffing into that column. . . .

This question was clearly too imprecise in its wording. It was intended to draw opinions as to (a) why there is not more expression of opinion in print about films by film-makers and (b) if the lack of it might be a symptom of estrangement between film criticism and creation. The chief point to emerge is that film-makers hesitate to write about films on grounds of "professional etiquette," etc., and several point out that while novelists and critics are working in the same medium, film-makers and critics are not. Both these points are also raised by the critics.

Let everyone draw his own conclusions. Enough to say here that the film-makers' point of view is perhaps best summed up by Robert Hamer, who writes after the last question: "I think there is far too little contact and attempt at mutual understanding between film-makers and critics. Rigorous schedules on both sides combine to effect this, but a once-yearly brief encounter in the Queens Bar is not fruitful enough." Since a 6-4 majority of critics express agreement with this, there would seem to be sufficient willingness on both sides to make increased contact a practical possibility—though not, as members of both professions have pointed out, *en masse* at bars or receptions. This was, indeed, the hope behind this questionnaire.

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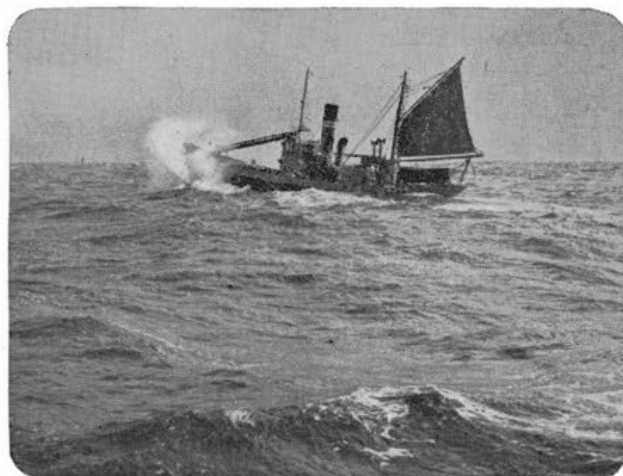
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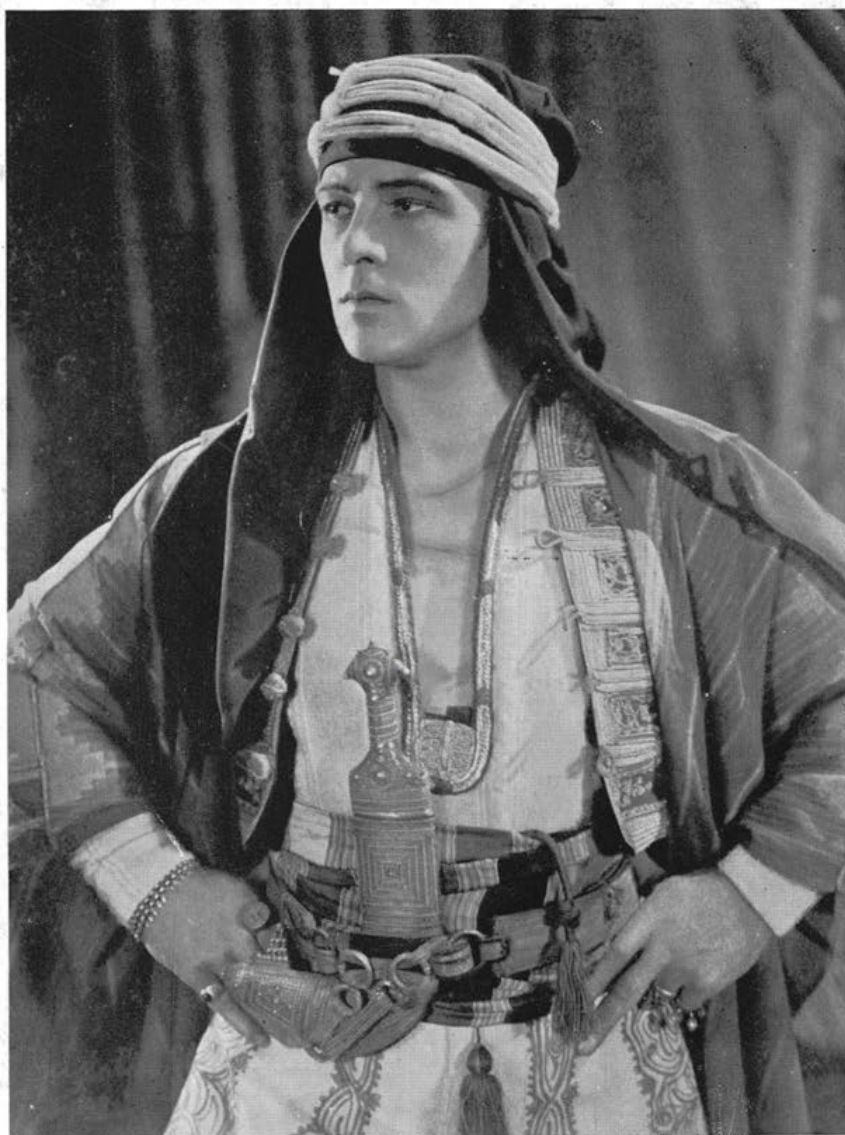
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